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HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN THE LATE ANTIQUE NEAR EAST

Edited by PHILIP WOOD

History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East

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Contents

Preface vii
List of Contributors ix
Introduction xi
Map xxiii

1. Sophronius of Jerusalem and the End of Roman History 1
   Phil Booth
2. Identity, Philosophy, and the Problem of Armenian History in the Sixth Century 29
   Tara L Andrews
3. The *Chronicle of Seert* and Roman Ecclesiastical History in the Sasanian World 43
   Philip Wood
4. Why Were the Syrians Interested in Greek Philosophy? 61
   Daniel King
5. You Are What You Read: Qenneshre and the Miaphysite Church in the Seventh Century 83
   Jack Tannous
6. The Prophet's City before the Prophet: Ibn Zabāla (d. after 199/814) on Pre-Islamic Medina 103
   Harry Munt
7. Topoi and Topography in the Histories of al-Ḥīra 123
   Adam Talib
8. 'The Crinkly-Haired People of the Black Earth': Examining Egyptian Identities in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's *Futūḥ* 149
   Hussein Omar

9. Forgetting Ctesiphon: Iran's Pre-Islamic Past, c. 800–1100 169
Sarah Bowen Savant
10. Legal Knowledge and Local Practices under the Early ʿAbbāsids 187
Mathieu Tillier

List of Abbreviations 205
Bibliography 207
Index 231

Preface

This volume arose out of a series of seminars organized at the Classics Centre of Corpus Christi College, Oxford in 2009. These were held on the theme of 'History and Identity, 500–1000', and we are grateful to the centre for accepting a proposal that dragged the Classics Centre so far out of the Greco-Roman world. Our thanks go, in particular, to Ewen Bowie, Tim Whitmarsh, James Howard-Johnston, and Bryan Ward-Perkins for their support and advice.

After the success of this series, a follow-up workshop was held in Corpus in 2010 on the same theme, and we are grateful to the British Academy and the Oxford Centre for Late Antiquity for their generous support. This volume is the fruit of both of these events. We would also like to thank Robert Hoyland and OUP's anonymous reviewer for their advice during its preparation.

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Introduction

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Late antiquity has been defined as a period in which the inheritance of the Greco-Roman past was re-configured in a series of new forms. In Peter Brown's *Making of Late Antiquity*, the period's cultural efflorescence was evoked as an inventive re-use of older pieces in a new mosaic, where Galen, Philo, and Pythagoras found an afterlife in the hands of Christian and Neoplatonic thinkers, and where Basil of Caesarea could show the part that *paideia* still had to play in training young men to read the Scriptures.[1] Even Augustine, reflecting on the fall of Rome and the relationship between Christians and the state, was reluctant to jettison the world of Varro and Virgil.[2]

This image of late antiquity as defined by its creative use of the past, rather than by political or economic decline, has not been restricted to philosophy and theology. It finds one of its most powerful expressions in the Christian emperor Constantine and the circle that surrounded him. If Eusebius of Caesarea emphasised Constantine's role as a new Moses, then his Christian rule was also a consummation of Rome's eternal destiny and of the imperial quest for victory, which had been evoked in numerous pagan panegyrics.[3] Christianity could be presented as a means of extending Roman triumph to lands beyond the reach of the greatest pagan emperors, such as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, into Ethiopia and Georgia.[4] Jas Elsner has observed that Constantine's great arch in Rome does not show 'decadence' through its use of the spolia of earlier emperors but rather shows that Constantine wished to show himself as a

1. P. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Harvard, 1978), esp. 8. See also T. Kopecek, 'The Cappadocian Fathers and Civic Patriotism', *Church History* 43 (1974), 293–303.

2. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), e.g., I.24 (On Roman and Christian virtue), XIX.2 (on Varro), XXII.27 (on Virgil).

3. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, I.8, trans. Averil Cameron and S. Hall (Oxford, 1999), 76. Compare the pagan panegyrics cited in S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1991), 27.

4. See, for instance, Theodoret, *HE*, I.23, ed. L. Parmentier and G. Hansen (Berlin, 1981), 73–4 on Ethiopia ('India'), and Theodoret, *Cure of Hellenic Maladies*, IX.33–5, ed. P. Canivet, SC 57 (Paris, 1958), II.346.

successor of them all, combining all of their virtues in a new golden age.[5] In politics, as in more rarefied pursuits, late antiquity was defined by its creative re-deployment of classical past and Christian present.

A long late antiquity

Brown's book took a very broad vision of late antiquity, seeing it as a cultural movement that went well beyond the fourth century and deep into the sixth, and sometimes even the eighth and ninth centuries. This long late antiquity was made into a plausible chronological and cultural unit by emphasising the importance of Greco-Roman culture to Rome's neighbours and successors, most importantly Sasanian Mesopotamia and Iran and the Arab caliphates that replaced both Rome and the Sasanians as the rulers of the near east.[6] Underneath these cultural continuities also lay important economic and social continuities, of an urbanised culture that extended from Egypt to the borders of the Iranian plateau, a zone that would be united politically under Arab rule.[7]

Alongside this continuous reception of Greco-Roman culture and its redeployment, late antiquity also saw the integration of new strands of monotheist history into the past of the Roman Empire. For these fourth-century sources, the monotheist past represented a key era around which histories should be constructed and elaborated. The treatment of this past could encapsulate a historian's solution to the problems faced by later generations, where the antiquity of the patriarchs of the Old Testament and the glories of the martyrs were bequeathed to Christian emperors in the writings of Eusebius.[8] For his successors, the ecclesiastical historians of the fifth century, the Theodosian emperors could be considered part of a succession of orthodox rulers going back to Constantine, through which a connection to a prestigious Christian past eclipsed the shame of contemporary military defeat.[9] By the same token, as Ed Watts has argued, political defeat might also be associated with imperial heresy by

5. J. Elsner, 'From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique Forms', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 68 (2000), 149–84. Also see his comments in idem, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History* 25 (2002), 358–79.

6. P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* AD *150–750* (London, 1989), 189–203, emphasises the role of the Arabs as 'new participants'.

7. The densely settled world of Sasanian Iraq is described in M. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, 1984).

8. See, in general, H. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops. The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore, 2000); G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth. The Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993).

9. For the Eusebian connection of church and empire and its continuation see G. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Evagrius* (Paris, 1977); P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et Sozomène* (Leuven, 2004).

those who wished to oppose an emperor's religion: for a Miaphysite like John Rufus, the fall of Rome could be seen as a fitting punishment for the Tome of Leo and its rigid Chalcedonianism.[10]

Though John Rufus and his fellow Miaphysites were not, in the long term, successful in their attempts to position themselves as an imperial orthodoxy, their efforts do point to a failure by the Roman Chalcedonians to maintain their monopoly over the monotheist past.[11] A crucial moment in this loss of control over the past was the defeat of the Romans at the hands first of Persians and then of Arabs at the beginning of the seventh century. These events accelerated the disconnection between Roman and Christian history for Christians living in the Middle East, who began to recast their own history in a way that diminished the importance of the Roman state. The paper by Phil Booth in this volume examines how Palestinian Christians withdrew from older ideas of empire in the early seventh century, while those of Dan King and Jack Tannous, who focus on Jacob of Edessa and the monastery of Qenneshre, examine the role of monastic educational systems in filling the role of the state in creating boundaries between Christian communities.

However, at the same time that eastern Christians recast their own past, their Muslim conquerors found a repertoire of symbols and topoi about their own monotheist past within a late Roman Christian tradition. As the late Tom Sizgorich has argued with respect to the adoption of ascetic ideas in Islam, symbols 'native to the imaginary of various Christian communities began new careers in the nascent Muslim *umma*'s narration of events'.[12] The boundaries of a new religious community were asserted through the intellectual tools of a Roman 'other', already familiar through long use in the conquered lands of Egypt, Syria, and, to a lesser extent, Iraq and Arabia. In a sense, this redeployment of older topoi is an indication of how far the pervasive influence of Roman ideas could outstrip the fall of the empire itself.[13] For Adam Talib, Harry Munt,

10. E. Watts, 'John Rufus, Timothy Aelurus and the Fall of the Western Roman Empire', in R. Mathisen and D. Shanzer (eds.), *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World* (Aldershot, 2008), 97–106. The term 'Miaphysite' is used throughout to refer to Christians who subscribed to the doctrine of the unified human and divine nature of Christ. It is the term favoured by the modern-day Syrian Orthodox Church.

11. For the union of 'orthodoxy' and Romanitas in the sixth century, see the important article by G. Greatrex, 'Roman Identity in the Sixth Century', in G. Greatrex and S. Mitchell, *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity* (London, 2000), 267–92.

12. T. Sizgorich, '"Become Infidels or We Will Throw You into the Fire": The martyrs of Najran in early Muslim historiography, hagiography and Qu'ranic exegesis', in A. Papaconstantinou, M. Debié, and H. Kennedy (eds.), *Writing True Stories: Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Near East* (Leiden, 2009), 125–47, at 146. See also T. Sizgorich, 'Narrative and Community in Islamic Late Antiquity', *Past & Present* 185 (2004), 9–42.

13. Cf. R. Mathisen and D. Shanzer, *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World* (Aldershot, 2008), 2, for the West.

and Hussein Omar, in their contributions to this volume, the Christian or Jewish past provided important raw material for the formation of new regional identities in the emerging caliphate and for the prestige of its cities—Cairo, Medina, and Kufa—which used monotheist histories to generate an antiquity that could rival older foundations. In a parallel exercise, Philip Wood's paper suggests that this process of redeployment, in which Roman Christian history was re-used outside the communities that first generated it, can also be witnessed in late Sasanian Iraq. Here, local Christians integrated 'Western' ecclesiastical history into an indigenous tradition.

The key issue that runs through these studies of the sixth to ninth centuries is the importance of the past, both real and imagined, in constructing the boundaries of contemporary cultures. This act of construction could work against contemporary outsiders, to exclude those who did not fit into a favoured historical narrative or to criticise those who failed to live up to an author's expectations for the proper behaviour of a member of his community—'identity', conceived as 'who you are and what you should do'.[14] As Rosamond McKitterick has argued for Carolingian history-writing, historical texts can be studied as 'constructed narratives and bearers of memory', sites for the rejection or assimilation of inherited or neighbouring cultural traditions.[15] In this sense, claims about the past were also interventions, asserting the primacy of certain identities over others, against a reality that was likely to be much more culturally heterogeneous and complex than an author might necessarily allow.[16] Indeed, we see hints of this complexity on the ground in the Egyptian documentary papyri (Omar) and in the uncertainty of Jacob of Edessa's correspondents (Tannous).

At the same time, statements about the past also create chronological boundaries, as well as contemporary social ones. The imagination of communities was also linked to the imagination of histories, in which certain events in the past were privileged and in which their recurrence or future significance was anticipated. In the definition of a community around past martyrdom (Andrews, on Armenia in the 570s), church councils (Wood, on the memory of

14. See, for instance, two important observations on the use of Arabic in the Coptic church: A. Papaconstantinou, '"They Shall Speak the Arabic Language and Take Pride in It": Reconsidering the Fate of Coptic after the Arab Conquest', *Le Muséon* 120 (2007) 273–99, and J. Zaborowski, 'Egyptian Christians Implicating Chalcedonians in the Arab Takeover of Egypt: The Arabic Apocalypse of Samuel of Qalamun', *Oriens Christianus* 87 (2003), 100–15.

15. R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), 2; B. Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction: Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area* (Leuven, 2010), 13–15.

16. R. Miles, *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity* (London and New York, 1999), 5. We have also been influenced by W. Pohl, 'Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity', in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities* 300–800 (Leiden, 1998), 17–70.

Chalcedon in Iraq), or forgotten glories (Savant and Talib, on the Sasanian past of Muslim Iraq), authors were also declaring a boundary around what kind of past could be used to establish the future of a given community. Thus, in Andrews' example, both Ełišē and John of Ephesus, in constructing a narrative of Miaphysite martyrdom, also seek to exclude other potential histories of Armenia, which might have allowed for greater cooperation with the Sasanian world or rapprochement with the Chalcedonians.

Therefore, in receiving and altering the past, the authors under examination here also articulated how their vision should affect the lives of others, of how they should envisage the boundaries of their shared community, and how that community's members should behave. The assertion of a chain of 'forefathers', whose opinions needed to be preserved in the face of deviant thinkers, was part of a strategy for cultural reproduction, where the past was quarried for pure exempla that could be followed in the future and continue this chain of succession. As Mathieu Tillier observes in his paper on local legal rulings in the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, appeals to custom were a means of connecting a specific intellectual elite, whether priests, monks or ʿ*ulamā*, to a specific locality or region.[17]

Historical Invention and the Formation of Identity

The seminars and colloquium that formed the basis for this volume have focused on processes of historical invention, examining how Christian and Muslim authors used earlier monotheist histories to mould the societies in which they lived. In particular, this collection poses a series of associated questions about how we should read historical sources that report past events while simultaneously making assertions about contemporary ideals and identities. This is an issue that has long been highlighted in Islamic historiography: as Stephen Humphreys observes, descriptions of the seventh century may put us in a much better position to understand how ninth-century Muslims understood themselves and their past than to understand how political events actually unfolded in the seventh century.[18]

A number of the papers in this volume investigate how the re-use of the past invokes specific lineages that connect with the present, whether these be genealogical, cultural, intellectual, or geographical. These investigations have not

17. P. Wood, *'We Have no King but Christ'. Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c.400–585)* (Oxford, 2010), chap. 6, makes a similar argument for the connection between ascetic custom and local identity in the works of John of Ephesus. Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction*, 16, writes of priests as holders of a *Traditionskern*, following the model of R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelaltliche Gentes* (Cologne, 1961) for the Goths.

18. R. S. Humphreys, *Islamic Historiography: A Framework for Enquiry* (London, 1991), 69.

been restricted to history in the more limited sense that I have used it above, and they go beyond chronicles to encompass ideas of the past in philosophy, theology, liturgy, and jurisprudence.[19] All of these discourses have ideas of lineage that, though conceived differently, connect the present to some 'orthodox' golden age and have implied consequences for the self-awareness and behaviour of their recipients and participants.

How this creation of a past golden age works in practice differs considerably among the case studies, but one general comment should be made about how we conceive 'identity' and how this might be affected by changing ideas about the past. None of these papers presents identity as essential and unchanging. For all of them, identity is something more fluid and reactive, often an assertion of difference in response to a moment of political stress or cultural uncertainty.[20] As a consequence, the societies, institutions, and peoples of the Near East (or at least certain elites and intellectuals within them) had recourse to a protean sense of the past, and this past was invoked in many different configurations to give continuity and legitimacy to different assertions about the future.

The papers in this collection straddle the Roman-Persian frontier and encompass the period from the end of the fifth century to the ninth and tenth, firmly including the Islamic world. The core of Brown's formulation of late antiquity, in spite of its great diversity, consisted of sources in Greek and Latin, in which the initial reformulation of a classical past was most visible. Our focus is different. We concentrate instead upon on the eastern edges of the former Roman world and on the other language traditions that were empowered by the diffusion of monotheism in the Near East—Syriac, Armenian, and, above all, Arabic.

The Christian Orient

The first part of the volume considers the reworking of the past by Christians living and writing in the Near East. Tara Andrews and Philip Wood both examine how we might reconstruct the developing self-identity of peripheral groups in the Roman world after their histories have been rewritten in the aftermath of the Arab conquests and how we can understand pre-Islamic history when our main narratives are often post-Islamic.

Andrews' contribution is sceptical about the retrojection of the later narrative of the eternal destiny of the Armenians as a people united by language,

19. Compare the observations of R. McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 255–6, on canon-law collections as histories; M. Debié, 'Writing History as "Histories": The Biographical Dimension of East Syrian Hagiography', in Papaconstantinou, Debié, and Kennedy (eds.), *Writing True Stories*, 43–77; F. Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical" Texts as Historical Narrative', *Viator* 25 (1994), 95–113.

20. Here we follow E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1700: Programme, Myth and Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1992), 8.

faith, and land—of a ninth-century tale of Maccabean martyrs resisting Zoroastrians, Chalcedonians, and Muslims. Pointing to traces of alternative sixth-century sources, which envisage a Chalcedonian Armenia or depict the disunity of its princes, she emphasises the sixth-century interest in doctrinal rapprochement and shared intellectual interests with the Greek-speaking world. In particular, she suggests a sixth-century date for Ełišē's history of the revolt of Vardan Mamikonean and situates its composition in the efforts of Miaphysites to take possession of the earlier history of Armenia and its struggle against the Persians.[21]

Wood's paper considers the development of Christian historiography in the Church of the East in the same era. He observes that the late sixth century sees a massive expansion in the cultural awareness and international horizons of Christians in the Sasanian world, and that this is seen in the injection of new strands of Roman ecclesiastical history into a narrative previously dominated by 'indigenous' material. By dating the various levels of much later medieval sources such as the *Chronicle of Seert*, he suggests the community of Christians in Iraq was heir to several different strands of Dyophysite history from the Greek-speaking world. It is this era of exposure to Western ideas that accounts for the contradictory attitudes of later 'Nestorians' towards such divisive moments as the council of Chalcedon and the career of the patriarch Nestorius himself.

Three papers on Christians in the east during the transition to Islamic rule focus on the production of new means of connecting to the past, when older systems of political tradition and prestige were in flux.[22] Phil Booth's paper on the patriarch Sophronius considers the importance of Jerusalem in the patriarch's writings during the controversy over imperial monotheletism, and the effects of the tumultuous events of the Arab conquest on his theological ideas and political position.[23] Booth suggests that the patriarch, faced by a defeated emperor who had turned to heresy, increasingly distanced himself from the history of the Roman Empire through the use of liturgy. For Sophronius, he suggests, it was the historical character of liturgy as a replacement for other kinds of history that allowed this bond to be dissolved, in which the apolitical character of Christianity could be realised again by concentrating on the priest's re-enactment of

21. She builds on the work of N. Garsoïan, *L'église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient* (Louvain, 1999).

22. Here see the observations of M. Morony, 'History and Identity in the Syrian Churches', in J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-Van Den Berg, and T. M. Van Lint (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity. Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam* (Peeters, 2005), 1–33, who sees the late sixth to eighth centuries as crucial for the formation of confessional identity in the Near East.

23. For a new narrative of the events of the Arab conquest of Palestine, see J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010).

the alternative history of the Last Supper. Sophronius asserted 'an identity which found its guarantee not in the fluctuating fortunes of the Christian Roman empire, but in the pre-ordained progression of the terrestrial Church towards its transformation in the *eschaton*'. In the same era in which the church abandoned the Greek ecclesiastical histories of earlier centuries—works in the style of Eusebius, Theodoret, and Evagrius—some Roman Christians in seventh-century Palestine turned instead to a different kind of commemoration of the past that side-stepped the Eusebian connection of church and empire.[24]

In the wake of the dissolution of these ties of politics and history, however, other authors used their inheritance in very different ways to assert their prestigious connections to the fourth century. Instead of church history, these authors turned to philosophy and theology to develop their own narratives of succession, focused on chains of masters and disciples in the Syriac-speaking, 'Jacobite' monasteries of the former Roman East and in Sasanian Iraq.[25]

King engages with this problem of cultural inheritance by asking why Syriac-speakers continued to translate and teach Aristotle, especially in the sixth and seventh centuries, and concludes that we must reject Brown's idea that logic was employed as 'an impartial, technocratic tool', or that it was integrated into a wider confessional agenda.[26] For both western and eastern Syrians, the Syriac philosophical tradition was oriented towards pedagogy and provided an intellectual culture that could transcend denominational boundaries. Far from being a tool for division, a shared interest in philosophy, and logic in particular, was a unifying feature of the heritage of the Christians of the Near East, one that would continue to develop under the later patronage of the ʿAbbāsids.

Tannous, by contrast, tackles the opposite side of the same era of West Syrian cultural efflorescence. He suggests that the canon-law traditions and educational curricula drawn from the patristic past must be read as efforts to create boundaries between different Christian denominations. Like King, he places the monastery of Qenneshre at the centre of a network of intellectual contacts, which supplied village priests with the answers to sophisticated theological questions and legitimated their own local attempts at boundary formation.[27] He regards the translation of Greek into Syriac at Qenneshre as the foundation of a distinctive West Syrian curriculum that would last until the

24. But contrast the continued production of chronicles in West Syrian circles: M. Debié, 'L'heritage grecque', in M. Debié (ed.), *L'historiographie syriaque* (Paris, 2009), 1–35.

25. For the background to this discussion, see Sebastian P. Brock, 'From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning', in N. Garsoïan, T. Matthews, and R. Thomson (eds.), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington DC, 1982), 17–32.

26. Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom : Triumph and Diversity, AD 200–1000* (Oxford, 1997), 173.

27. On Qenneshre, see J. Watt, 'A Portrait of John Bar Aphthonia, Founder of the Monastery of Qenneshre', in J.-W. Drijvers and J. Watt (eds.), *Portraits of Spiritual Authority* (Leiden, 1999), 155–69.

days of Bar Hebraeus, in the thirteenth century. Here he points to the deep connections between identity formation and educational institutions: for these divided Christian communities in Tur ʿAbdin, 'you were what you read'. Where King suggests that much of this curriculum was shared across the Syriac-speaking world, and doubts the importance of dialectic philosophy in sustaining everyday debates, Tannous considers the Qenneshre curriculum to be at the core of the monastery's fame and the policing of inter-confessional boundaries.

A New History for the Conquerors

The second half of the book investigates the re-working of the past by Islamic authors, both in response to the Qur'an and its unfulfilled eschatological promises and in reaction to the closer contact between Arabs and non-Arabs, and Muslims and non-Muslims, which led to the creolisation of different visions of the past to generate new regional identities. Using Day's theory of 'the succession of societies', Harry Munt's paper tackles this problem by investigating the production of history for the new holy city of the Hijaz, Medina (Yathrib), by the historian Ibn Zabāla in the eighth century.[28] While Mecca and Jerusalem already had established histories as centres of pilgrimage, Medina's political importance in Muhammad's revolution did not have such a prestigious past. Munt uses citations gathered from later historians to reconstruct Ibn Zabāla's historical invention, which gave a central role to the Jews as a source of an Abrahamic lineage for the city and explained the crimes that led to their later fall from divine grace. By reading Ibn Zabāla's treatment of this material against the use that other historians made of similar stories, Munt is able to explain this distinctively Medinan appropriation of the Jewish past into the Muslim historical experience, which created a meritorious and relevant pre-Islamic history for Muslims' veneration of Medina.

Talib follows a parallel interest in the history of earlier monotheists by the Muslim conquerors. Al-Ḥīra, in southwestern Iraq, once on the edge of the Sasanian empire, became a suburb of the new Arab Muslim foundation of Kufa. A powerful bishopric and the burial place of a series of catholicoi of the Church of the East, it was also the capital of the Lakhmid kings, the Arab clients of the Sasanian shahs who converted to Christianity on the eve of the Islamic conquests.[29] Talib emphasises the importance of al-Ḥīra as a centre of

28. D. Day, *Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others* (Oxford, 2008).

29. J. Fiey, s.v. Hira, *Dictionnaire de l'histoire et géographie ecclésiastique*; J. Fiey, 'Résidences et sépultures des patriarches syriaques orientaux', *Le Muséon* 98 (1985), 149–68. On the Lakhmids and their Naṣrid rulers, see M. J. Kister, 'Al-Hira. Some Notes on Its Relations with Arabia,' *Arabica* 15 (1968), 143–69.

poetry in the ʿAbbāsid era, as a distinctive vehicle for the re-invention of the past. As a city with a distinctive connection to an Arab past that was both Christian and Iranian, its poets were able to juxtapose themes of religious asceticism and luxuriant kingship. Some of these poems directly tackle the eclipse of both Christianity and Iran by peninsular Muslim Arabs. But importantly, this nostalgic vision of the past rendered the Islamic conquests bittersweet, even to the pens of Muslim poets.[30] Strikingly, Talib also argues that this nostalgia may have had its origins in the fatalistic poetry of pre-Islamic al-Ḥīra itself, whose poets may have written their own obituaries and bequeathed their sympathies to Muslim successors who wrote in the same genre.

Cultural Independence in the Caliphate

Where Munt and Talib's papers concentrate on the ʿAbbāsid era reflected in the histories of earlier Arabs and their relations to Judaism and Christianity, papers by Omar and Savant extend our discussion to the treatment of non-Arab pasts by Arabic commentators in the ninth century and tenth centuries, setting these discussions in the broader context of struggles for cultural and political independence within the caliphate.[31] Hussein Omar's paper focuses on this process in Egypt, reading Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's biographical dictionary of noted Egyptian jurists alongside the evidence of the *ḥadīth* and the papyri to suggest how ethnic terminology changed in Egypt and how this in turn suggests a changing relationship with the 'indigenous' Christian ('Coptic') population. Earlier historiography placed Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's assertion of Qurayshī lineage for Egyptian jurists in the context of the takeover of the Ṭūlūnids, Turkish clients of the ʿAbbāsids.[32] But Omar argues that the presentation of these men as both Qurayshī and Maṣrī also suggests changing ideas about the Copts, who were no longer merely tillers of the soil but were given a more active role as allies of the Muslims, as marriage partners, and as a brother race in a world where Arabs were settled in the countryside. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's ideas do not begin with the ninth-century shifts in politics; they are also inherited from ideas that circulated in early *ḥadīth* and the self-identity of the Coptic church under Chalcedonian persecution.

30. Here he develops the ideas of Julie Scott Meisami, 'Places in the Past: The Poetics/Politics of Nostalgia', *Edebiyat*, n.s., vol. 8, (1998), 63–106, for a Christian, Ḥīran milieu.

31. These were often referred to as *shuʿūbiyya*: see R. Mottahedeh, 'The Shuʿûbîyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976), 161–82. The use of this term will be discussed and critiqued in S. Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

32. H. Kennedy, 'Central Government and Provincial Elites in the Early Abbasid Caliphate', *BSOAS* 44 (1981), 26–38.

Sarah Bowen Savant's article considers the memory of the Persian past in the later ʿAbbāsid period, specifically the surprising amnesia that surrounded the massive conurbation of Ctesiphon. Here, the real history of the Sasanian shahs was mostly forgotten, with the exception of the impressive reign of Khusraw I, and fragments of the earlier myths of the *Khudāy-nāmag* were inserted in their place.[33] Using the example of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, she suggests that the ruins of Ctesiphon were a disturbing place for some authors, a sign of both the greatness of past empires and of the folly of imperial luxury. But in addition to being a place for writers to reflect on the relationship between Islam and authority, the site of Ctesiphon took on further resonances, as an emblem of dissent against the caliph by Shīʿī Daylamī rulers who deliberately recalled a Sasanian past. In this context too, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī presented the site as an emblem of defeat. As a locus of political anxiety and nostalgia, Ctesiphon provided a palimpsest, from which the older Sasanian histories were removed to leave a nearly blank canvas for the creation of new, more relevant memories, unconstrained by exact records.

The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate: A Normative Pluralism

Mathieu Tillier's paper concludes the volume by reminding us that, for many Sunnī Muslims, allegiance to schools of jurisprudence was another critical source of identity. In contrast to the regional focus that Savant and Omar emphasise, with their evocations of cultural independence and the pre-Islamic past, Tillier's paper focuses on the 'normative pluralism' of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate.[34] Legal authority under the late Umayyads had been decentralised, an environment in which the judiciary was regarded as a local institution employing local inhabitants, at a time when there was a high turnover of urban governors. Tillier charts a gradual process of centralisation in the generations that followed the ʿAbbāsid revolution, during which the caliph began to claim the right to impose judges while still acknowledging the variety of legal practice and taking care to consult local opinion. He treats the transition from the 'ancient' to the 'personal' or 'doctrinal' schools of law as the tension between two forms of identity. At a local level, the Muslim people of the chief cities defended their material and moral interests with their attachment to local customs, rooted in the traditions

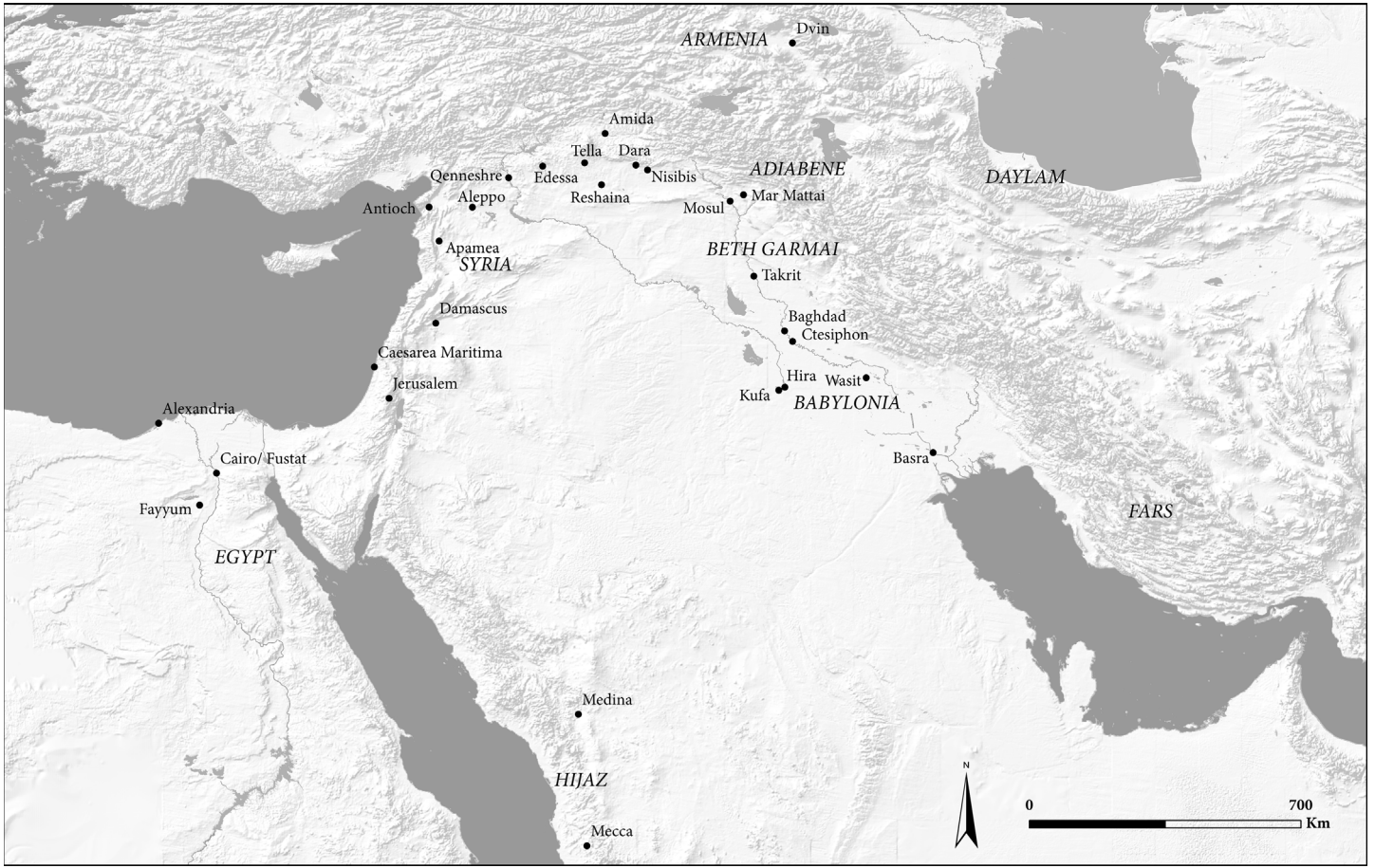
33. This text is analysed in its Middle Persian context in S. Shahbazi, 'On the Xwaday-Namag', in *Iranica Varia: Papers in Honour of Ehsan Yarshater* (Leiden, 1990), 208–29; M. Macuch, 'Pahlavi Literature', in R. Emmerick and M. Macuch (eds.), *The Literature of pre-Islamic Iran*, 116–96, at 173–7, though here Savant is primarily concerned with its Islamic-era reception. On this reception and its manuscript witnesses see Z. Rubin, 'Ibn al Muqaffa' and the Account of Sasanian History in the Manuscript Sprenger 30', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005), 52–93.

34. Here Tillier argues against the position of B. Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law. Harun-al-Rashid's Codification Project* (Berlin, 2007).

of the Companions of the Prophet and their Successors. But, at the same time, the ʿAbbāsid state engaged in a programme of centralisation and standardisation, an Islamic 'universalism' justified by the divine law that the ʿAbbāsids claimed to restore.[35]

Through a variety of genres, going well beyond the history-writing of chroniclers, authors of the period traced their connection to a formative golden age: to the actions of Christ re-enacted in liturgy and hagiography, to Constantine and the church councils, and to the martyr-rebel Vardan Mamikonean, as well as to Muhammad and his Companions and the participants in the *futūḥ*, both victors and defeated. But these neat formulations were complicated by other signs of the past that refused to be forgotten, from the anti-imperial strands of early Christian writings, witnessed in the writings of Sophronius, to the pre-Islamic relics of Yathrib, Egypt, and Iraq. If Brown's image of late antiquity focused on the re-forging of the classical past by the new Christian empire, our interest here is in the successors to these histories, who retained the idea of a monotheist golden age, but also sought to re-formulate and add to it, in an era when the first monotheist empire of the Near East was replaced by a second.

35. On this invocation of divine law see M. Sharon, *Black Banners from the East. The Establishment of the ʿAbbāsid State. Incubation of a Revolt* (Leiden, 1983), 147.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BETH GARMAI
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Baghdad
Ctesiphon
Caesarea Maritima
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Sophronius of Jerusalem and the End of Roman History

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Introduction

On the eighth of October 649 a Palestinian bishop named Stephen of Dora submitted a petition to a convention of western bishops at the Lateran palace in Rome. In that petition he described the 'wild waves' (*κύματα ἄγρια*) that were crashing upon the orthodox faith in the East, as successive emperors and patriarchs of Constantinople continued to disseminate the Christological doctrines of the one operation and one will. He recalled how the late patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius (634–39), had dispatched him to Rome, 'the see that rules and is placed over all others', in order to inform the pope of the dangerous doctrinal innovations threatening the faith in the East. According to Stephen's dramatic account, the aged patriarch had led him to the site of Christ's crucifixion, and there bound him with solemn oaths not to relent in his mission until the apostolic see had refuted and condemned the new, 'alien' doctrines.[1]

Less than a decade before these reported events at Jerusalem, Golgotha had witnessed quite a different scene. On the 21st of March 630 the emperor Heraclius had arrived in solemn procession from Constantinople in order to restore Christendom's most sacred relic, the True Cross.[2] The Cross had been seized after the Persian capture of Jerusalem in 614, but after a series of remarkable victories on Persian soil in 626–8 the Persian general Shahr-Barāz had returned it to the emperor as a condition of a new accord, and Heraclius had begun preparations for its dramatic restoration. After two decades, which had seen Jerusalem captured, Constantinople twice besieged, and Rome's eastern provinces occupied, the

1. For the petition, see *Acts of the Lateran Synod*, ed. R. Riedinger, *Concilium Lateranense a. 649 Celebratum*, 38–46, at 38, 40. For the council's *Acts* and their composition, see the series of seminal articles collected in R. Riedinger, *Kleine Schriften zu den Konzilakten des 7. Jahrhunderts* (Turnhout, 1998).

2. For the year of the restoration (often said to be 629 or 631), see B. Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1992), 2:293–309.

return of the Cross represented both the personal triumph of the emperor Heraclius and, on a larger scale, the victorious restoration of the pious Christian empire after a long period of reversal. It once again signalled the complete coinherence of the Roman empire and the Christian religion, united under the pious person of Heraclius, God's regent on earth. It was to be a new beginning, a new age of peace and Christian triumph.

This paper attempts to reconstruct something of the transition between these two dramatic scenes: between Golgotha as the context for imperial and Christian restoration in 630, and Golgotha as the context for Palestinian (and Roman) resistance to imperial doctrine later in that same decade. It traces that transition through the writings of the monk and patriarch, Sophronius of Jerusalem.[3] From 633 until his death in about 639, Sophronius was the most prominent opponent of the imperial doctrine of monenergism (the one operation in Christ); and after his death, his disciple Maximus Confessor led the charge against a further Constantinopolitan doctrine, monotheletism (the one will).[4] Through various recent studies our understanding of the theological aspects of those controversies have been much improved;[5] but here I want to explore the formation of that opposition in the dramatic and crucial period between our two scenes at Golgotha. I will argue that Sophronius's theological opposition to the emperor cannot be appreciated on doctrinal terms alone, but must be seen as inseparable from the fluctuating fortunes of Jerusalem in the same period. At the same time, this article argues, Sophronius and his circle complemented that opposition in the simultaneous elucidation of a post-Roman ideology that located the effective past, present, and future in the rites of the orthodox Church, irrespective of the Roman empire. As imperial power waned in Rome's eastern provinces, therefore, some Christians (at least) invested in new patterns of thought that located success not in the maintenance of a Christian Roman empire, but in the continued power and truth of the 'orthodox' Church and its rites.

3. For Sophronius and his life, see C. von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (Paris, 1972) and P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents: Introduction, Texts, Translations and Commentary* (Oxford, 2009).

4. I retain the date for Sophronius's death argued in C. von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie Monastique et Confession Dogmatique* (Paris, 1972), 97 n.136. Less convincing is the date (640) more recently proposed in D. Woods, 'The 60 Martyrs of Gaza and the Martyrdom of Bishop Sophronius of Jerusalem', *Aram* 15 (2003), 129–50.

5. See esp. K.-H. Uthemann, 'Der Neuchalkedonismus als Vorbereitung des Monotheletismus. Ein Beitrag zum eigentlichen Anliegen des Neuchalkendonismus', *Studia Patristica* 29 (1997), 373–413; F. Winkelmann, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit* (Frankfurt, 2001); H. Ohme, 'Oikonomia im monenergetisch-monotheletischen Streit', *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 12 (2008), 308–43; C. Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden, 2008).

It has now long been recognised that the sixth and seventh centuries witnessed a remarkable liturgification of public life, in both Constantinople and the provinces: new festivals and commemorative dates were added to the liturgical calendar, new hymns, acclamations, and prayers were added to existing rituals, and the rituals of state became increasingly interwoven with those of the Church.[6] This process of liturgification was both a boon and a threat to late antique emperors: on the one hand, the elevated position of the emperor in various ecclesiastical rituals expressed his exalted position as God's vicegerent on earth; on the other, as Gilbert Dagron has emphasised, it also laid bare his ambiguous sacerdotal status, for it proclaimed his ultimate dependence on the clerical mediation of the sacraments.[7] 'An emperor is nothing if he is not everything', Dagron states, 'and in particular if he is not the providential mediator between his people and God. But on this point—and this point alone—an effective resistance could be organised'.[8] In the imperial capital, this tension between imperial and clerical privilege could be constantly played out through the inclusion of the emperor in the liturgy. But in the provinces, where imperial power was increasingly absent, and where bishops were assuming an ever more prominent position as the leaders of local communities, it is perhaps unsurprising that Christian commentators looked to the rites of the Church as the foundation for the construction of a new, post-Roman identity, an identity that found its guarantee not in the fluctuating fortunes of the Christian Roman empire, but in the pre-ordained progression of the terrestrial Church towards its transformation in the eschaton.

The Capture of Jerusalem

When the Constantinopolitan author of the *Paschal Chronicle* came to record the events of 614, he embarked upon 'a rare attempt at grand writing'.[9] 'In this year around the month of June', the anonymous historian wrote, 'a disaster

6. See, e.g., H.-J. Schulz, *Die Byzantinische Liturgie: Vom Werden ihrer Symbolgestalt* (Freiburg, 1964), trans. M. J. O'Connell, *The Byzantine Liturgy: Symbolic Structure and Faith Expression* (New York, 1986), 29–49; D. Krueger, 'Christian Piety and Practice in the Sixth Century', in M. Maas (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005), 291–315, esp. 292–302. In Palestine this process of liturgical expansion is most dramatically expressed in the contrast of the Armenian (fifth-century) and Georgian (eighth-century) lectionaries; for analysis, see esp. J. F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Rome, 1987).

7. G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantin* (Paris, 1996), esp. 106–29.

8. Ibid. 129.

9. See M. Whitby and M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale 284–628 AD* (Liverpool, 1989), xii. Cf. ibid. 157 n.437: 'The author of *CP* seeks to highlight these events, which he clearly regarded as catastrophic, by a brief attempt at an uncharacteristically flowery style'.

worthy of unceasing grief befell us. For, along with many other cities of the east, Jerusalem was captured by the Persians, and many thousands of clerics, monks, and virgin nuns were slaughtered there. The tomb of the Lord was set ablaze and the famous temples of God, and, put simply, all the honourable places were razed to the ground. The Persians took the holy wood of the Cross along with sacred vessels that were beyond number, and the patriarch Zachariah even became a prisoner. And these things happened not over a long period time or even a whole month, but in mere days.'[10]

From the account of the Armenian historian Ps.-Sebēos (c.660), it appears that the inhabitants of Jerusalem submitted to the Persians without resistance, accepting their rule in return for peace.[11] Then, however, and despite the continued complaisance of the general population, certain elements had rebelled against and murdered the new administrators, thus inviting upon themselves the devastating vengeance of the Persian general Shahr-Barāz.[12] The subsequent death-count at Jerusalem varies according to the source,[13] and although archaeological evidence provides little or no confirmation of the picture of widespread damage to Jerusalem's Christian structures, recent work has nevertheless tied a number of mass graves situated along its walls to the Persian

10. *Paschal Chronicle*, ed. L. Dindorf, *Chronicon Paschale* (Bonn, 1832), 704–5.

11. For Persian policy in the east in this period (recently reassessed as moderate rather than oppressive), see R. Altheim-Stiehl, 'The Sasanians in Egypt: Some Evidence of Historical Interest', *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 31 (1992), 87–96; C. Foss, 'The Persians in the Roman Near East (602–630 AD)', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, ser. 3, vol. 13/2 (2003), 149–70.

12. See Ps.-Sebēos, *History*, 34, ed. G. Abgaryan, *Patmut'iwn Sebēosi* (Erevan, 1979), 115f. Sebēos attributes the rebellion to the *mankwnk* ('young men'), perhaps the circus partisans (sometimes referred to as, or at least including, *νέοι*); for this interpretation see A. Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976), 76. Strategius's narrative does not refer to an earlier submission to the Persians but describes a refusal to surrender, which he attributes to 'agitators and their leaders (*perturbatores et duces eorum*)', opposed to the policy of rapprochement adopted by the patriarch Zachariah; see *On the Fall of Jerusalem*, 5, ed. (in Georgian with Latin translation) G. Garitte, *La prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614* (Leuven, 1960), 2:8. For Shahr-Barāz's initial attempts to ensure the peaceful surrender of the Jerusalemites, see also Sebēos, *History of Heraclius*, Fragment 2, ed. G. Abgaryan (Erevan, 1979), *Patmut'iwn* 429–31, at 430; *Khuzistan Chronicle*, ed. I. Guidi, *Chronica Minora*, 1:15–39, at 25. For the fragments of the genuine Sebēos, see the useful study in J.-P. Mahé, 'Critical Remarks on the Newly Edited Excerpts from Sebēos', in T. J. Samuelian and M. E. Stone (eds.), *Medieval Armenian Culture* (Chico CA, 1984), 218–39.

13. Strategius, *On the Fall of Jerusalem* 23 [Garitte, *La prise*, 2:53]; Arabic recensions, G. Garitte (ed. and trans.), *Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614*, 2 vols. in 4 (Leuven, 1973–4), 1:54, 103; 3:147, 190; Ps.-Sebēos, *History*, 34 [Abgaryan, 116]; Thomas Artsruni, *History of the House of the Artsrunik'* 2.3, ed. K. Patkanean (St Petersburg, 1887), 89, repr. *Thomas Artsruni, History of the House of Artsrunik': A Facsimile Reproduction with An Introduction by Robert W. Thomson* (Delmar NY, 1991); Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6106, ed. C. De Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig, 1883), 301; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 11.1, ed. I.-B. Chabot, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899–1910), 4:403; *Anonymous Chronicle to 1234* 83, ed. I.-B. Chabot, *Chronicon Anonymum ad Annum Christi 1234 Pertinens*, 2 vols. (Leuven, 1916–20), 1:226.

assault.[14] We should, therefore, not dismiss as wilful exaggeration Christian claims of violence, however short-lived. The Jerusalemites' rebellion demanded as much.

According to the various sources that pertain to the punishment, the killing of some inhabitants and the destruction of significant Christian structures were accompanied also by the imprisonment of its patriarch Zachariah, the forced deportation of part of its population, and the seizure of Christendom's most sacred relic, the True Cross. The Cross was then removed to Persia where, according to Strategius's evocative account, its captors forced their Christian prisoners to trample upon it before the gates of Ctesiphon.[15]

For the monks of the Judean deserts, the capture of both the city and the Cross appears to have assumed a still greater piquancy. Around 630 Antiochus Monachus, archimandrite of the celebrated Laura of St Sabas, completed a monastic compendium, the *Pandects*; its preface described how, as the Persians approached Jerusalem, opportunist Arab tribesmen had launched an assault upon his monks in the hope of uncovering hidden monastic wealth. Antiochus reports that most of the laura's inhabitants fled to Arabia, but those who remained were tortured and then cut limb from limb, their bodies

14. Graves: G. Avni, 'The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 C.E.): An Archaeological Assessment', *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 357 (2010), 35–48. Walls: J. Magness, 'Archaeological Evidence for the Sasanian Persian Invasion of Jerusalem', in K. G. Holum and H. Lapin (eds.), *Shaping the Middle East: Jews, Christians and Muslims in an Age of Transition* (Bethesda MD, 2011), 85–98. For the meager archaeological evidence that might be tied to the conquest, including an inscription recording Modestus's restoration of the Church of the Ascension, see also R. Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study* (Princeton, 1995), 33–9, and D. Ben-Ami and Y. Tchekhanovets, 'A Hoard of Golden Coins from the Givati Parking Lot and Its Importance to the Study of Jerusalem in the Late Byzantine Period', in E. Meyron (ed.), *City of David: Studies of Ancient Jerusalem, the 10th Annual Conference* (Jerusalem, 2008), 35–44. It is possible that the lack of firm archaeological data results from the actions of Modestus in restoring damaged buildings, referred to in several sources; see, e.g., Antiochus Monachus, *Letter to Eustathius* [*PG* 89, 1428B]; Strategius, *On the Fall of Jerusalem* 24 [Garitte, *La prise*, II 55]; Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver*, 18, ed. André J. Festugière, in André J. Festugière and Lennart Rydén, *Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre* (Paris, 1974), 365f.; Ps.-Sebēos, *History* 35–6 [Abgaryan, 116–121]; *Palestinian-Georgian Liturgical Calendar*, ed. G. Garitte, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien de Sinaiticus 34 (Xe siècle)* (Brussels, 1958), 110–1; Eutychius, *Annals*, 28, 30, ed. M. Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien* (Leuven, 1985), 120, 128; and the manuscript variations of Theophanes' *Chronicle* AM 6120, in De Boor 328 n.26. Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 16 [Festugière, 364], calls Modestus 'the new Noah', 'not because he had obtained a single ark but because he had restored all the holy arks of God'. The *Khuzistan Chronicle*, ed. I Guidi, in *Chronica Minora* (Paris 1903), 1:27, attributes the reconstruction to Khusraw's celebrated Christian minister Yazdin (a remnant, no doubt, of Persian propaganda).

15. Strategius, *On the Fall of Jerusalem* 18 [Garitte, *La prise*, II, 37]. For the journey of the Cross from Ctesiphon to Jerusalem, see also the various tales contained with the hagiographic corpus of Anastasius the Persian, ed. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, vol. 1.

left unburied.[16] The celebrated monastic communities of the Judean deserts were therefore confronted with a double disaster: first, the capture of Jerusalem by the Persians; and second, the murder or imprisonment of prominent monks at the hands of opportunist raiders from the Syrian deserts.

Certain of the region's monks were too traumatised to return to their former communities. In his preface to the *Pandects* (c.630), Antiochus Monachus describes the attempts of the new patriarchal locum tenens Modestus to persuade the former residents of St Sabas to resettle their laura: on the first occasion, the monks remained in their laura for two months, until 'rumour of a barbarian incursion' forced their retreat closer to Jerusalem; on the second, Antiochus reports, some remained 'but for a short time, out of fear of the Saracens who neighboured us'.[17] Confronted with the absence of Roman power—and thus also with the opening of more marginal zones to the attentions of nomadic raiders—other monks abandoned the province altogether, and retreated to the Latin West.

The *Acts* of the Roman Lateran Council (649) and the associated *Letters* of Pope Martin point to significant Palestinian communities in North Africa, where, in the 620s or 630s, a satellite Laura of St Sabas had been founded.[18] The correspondence of the exiled Palestinian monk Maximus the Confessor also indicates the presence of various eastern monks in North Africa,[19] amongst whom was his own spiritual master, 'the divine Sophronius', who, Maximus claims in his *Opuscula*, 'spent time in the province of Africa with me and with all the foreign monks (*in Afrorum regione mecum et cum omnibus peregrinis monachis moras agebat*)'.[20]

16. Antiochus Monachus, *Letter to Eustathius*, ed. *PG* 89, 1421B–1428B, at 1424B-D. Antiochus claims that 'The number of dead was forty-four, and they are celebrated on 15 May' (1425D). For similar accounts, see Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba*, 7, ed. C. Houze, 'Vita sancti Chozebitae auctore Antonio eius discipulo', *Analecta Bollandia* 7 (1888), 95–144 and 336–59, at 129f.; *Anonymous Life of John the Almsgiver*, 9, ed. H. Delehaye, 'Une vie inédite de Saint Jean l'Aumonier', *Analecta Bollandia* 45 (1927), 19–25, at 23f.

17. Antiochus Monachus, *Letter to Eustathius* [*PG* 1424D–1425B]. It is evident that certain monks of Choziba felt similar fears; see Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba* 8 [Houze, 134–5].

18. For the westward migration of Eastern monks in this period, see J.-M. Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époque byzantine et carolingienne (milieu du VI^e^ s.–fin du IX^e^ s.)* (Brussels, 1983). For a North African Laura of St Sabas, see *Acts of the Lateran Council* [Riedinger, 50, 57]; Pope Martin, *Letter to the Church of Carthage*, ed. *PL* 87 147CD.

19. I cannot deal here with the many reasons for distrusting the biographical traditional that presents Maximus as a Constantinopolitan aristocrat before his conversion to monasticism, but see esp. S. Brock, 'An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor', *Analecta Bollandia* 91 (1973), 299–346, and C. Boudignon, 'Maxime le confesseur: Etait-il constantinopolitain?', in B. Janssens, B. Rosen, and P. van Deun (eds.), *Philomathestatos: Studies in Greek Patristic and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret* (Louvain, 2004), 11–43.

20. Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula* 12, ed. *PG* 141–6, at 142A. In their petition to the Lateran Synod, the assembled Eastern monks refer to their collective presence in North Africa; see *Acts of the Lateran Synod* [Riedinger, 52]. Cf. also George of Reshaina, *Life of Maximus Confessor* 18–20, ed. S. Brock, 'An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor', *Analecta Bollandia* 91 (1973), 310f.

Sophronius was at Alexandria when news arrived of the Persian capture of Jerusalem. According to the biographical prologue attached to certain manuscripts of the *Spiritual Meadow*, the hagiographic opus of his spiritual master John Moschus, the prospect of an imminent Persian invasion had earlier forced Sophronius and Moschus from Palestine to Egypt, where the pair had entered into the service of the Chalcedonian patriarch John the Almsgiver.[21] When Moschus 'heard of the capture of the holy places and the cowardice of the Romans', however, 'he left Alexandria and sailed to the great city of the Romans, along with his dearest disciple Sophronius'.[22] En route to Rome, however, the two monks travelled via 'various islands', and, before their arrival in North Africa, there is good reason to assume an extended sojourn on Cyprus, the birthplace of their erstwhile patron John the Almsgiver.[23]

It is to this initial period of exile that we should perhaps ascribe Sophronius's emotive poem *On the Capture of Jerusalem*.[24] The poem commences with a *recusatio*, not because its author proclaims his abilities too meagre, but because its substance defies adequate human expression. Sophronius proceeds to describe how the Persians appeared in Rome's eastern provinces and then approached Jerusalem; how the Christians in surrounding towns abandoned their homes, and sought the safety of the holy city; and how the Persians laid siege to the city and penetrated its defences, slaughtering the Christian population and seizing 'holy spoils' (*ἅγια σκῦλα*).[25] The progression of the poem is encapsulated in the ascending doublets that punctuate the text: from 'Come, children of the blessed Christians, grieve for the lofty Jerusalemites' and 'Weep, nations of the blessed Christians, for the holy Jerusalemites are slain'; to 'Christ, may you see to it that Persia is soon seen burning in revenge for the holy places' and 'Christ, may you subdue the ill-starred children of God-hating Persia by the hands of the Christians'.[26]

As such lines make evident, the poem is nearly Manichaean in its moral vision. The Persians are presented both as barbaric, wielding 'murderous swords' and 'accomplishing all with cruelty';[27] and demonic, blaspheming

21. For the flight from the East, see *Prologue to the Spiritual Meadow*, ed. H. Usener, *Der heilige Tychon* (Leipzig, 1907), 91–3, at 91f.; for the pair's service under John the Almsgiver, see Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver*, e.g., 5, 31 [Festugière, 349f., 382].

22. *Prologue to the Spiritual Meadow* [Usener, 92]. For the 'great city of the Romans' as Rome on the Tiber rather than New Rome, see A. Louth, 'Did John Moschus Really Die in Constantinople?' *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., vol. 49 (1988), 149–54; contra, E. Follieri, 'Dove e quando morì Giovanni Mosco?', *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, n.s., vol. 25 (1988).

23. For the presence of the pair on Cyprus, see John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* 30, ed. *PG* 87:3 2877B; *Epitome of the Life of John the Almsgiver* 16 [Lappa-Zizicas, 278].

24. Sophronius, *On the Capture of Jerusalem*, ed. M. Gigante, *Sophronii Anacreontica* (Rome, 1957), 102–7.

25. Sophronius, *On the Capture of Jerusalem* 99, in Gigante, 107. It is possible that the *ἅγια σκῦλα* include the Cross, although Sophronius makes no explicit mention of it.

26. Sophronius, *On the Capture of Jerusalem*, 5–6, 23–4, 73–4, 91–2 [Gigante, 102–7].

27. Ibid. 28, 93 [Gigante, 103, 107].

against God and inspired through 'the mania of demons'.[28] The Christians of Palestine, in contrast, are the passive victims of Persian aggression, an ἱερὸς δῆμος that flees before the Persian armies; Jerusalem is inhabited 'as a heaven', and its virgins 'appear like angels upon the earth'.[29] The devastation is thus conceived as both the clash of unfettered, barbarous aggression against settled civilisation and the sacrificial slaughter of an angelic Christian nation by demonic pagans. The Jerusalemites here, therefore, are blameless, and in ascribing Persian success to demonic inspiration, Sophronius externalises its cause and thus postpones the need to reconcile events to divine providence. There is no introspection, no appeal to collective Christian sin as the cause of divine anger. Jerusalem's destruction cannot be appeased by the moral restoration of its population; it must instead be appeased through the sanctified violence of the pious Christian empire.

The *Restitutio Crucis*

Sophronius's call for revenge against the Persians was soon realised. For the remainder of the decade the empire stood in a perilous situation: the Avars were menacing the Balkans, the Persians expanded their occupation of the eastern provinces, and in 615 a hostile Persian force had even reached Constantinople.[30] But from 622 the emperor Heraclius—in defiance of the late-antique custom that emperors remain in the capital—led a series of remarkable campaigns deep into the Persian empire, raids that in 628 precipitated a rebellion against Khusraw II and the attempts of his successors to reach a settlement.[31] As part of that settlement, Heraclius received the captured Cross from the Persian general and future king, Shahr-Barāz.[32]

The return of the Cross to Jerusalem in the spring of 630 was planned as an elaborate set piece on the grandest scale, suffused with various levels of significance. Its date was selected with precision, for it was no coincidence that contemporaries associated the 21st of March with the creation of the celestial bodies and thus with the beginning of time.[33] The restoration of the Cross

28. Ibid. 25f. [Gigante, 103].

29. Ibid. 33 [Gigante, 104].

30. For the Persians at Constantinople, see Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6107; *Acts of Anastasius the Persian* 8, ed. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 1:49; Nicephorus, *Short History*, 6, ed. C. Mango, *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History* (Washington DC, 1990), 44; *Paschal Chronicle* [Dindorf, 706].

31. For these campaigns, see the various papers in J. Howard-Johnston, *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot, 2006).

32. For Shahr-Barāz as the restorer of the Cross and for discussion of the various chronological problems connected with its return, see the authoritative reconstruction in Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:295–7.

33. For the 21st of March as the date of the creation of the heavenly bodies (φωστῆρες) see *Paschal Chronicle* [Dindorf, 26–27]. For this same theme of (re-)creation see also Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6119, which associates Heraclius's six-year campaign in Persia with the six days of creation; cf. George of Pisidia, *Heraclias* 3, fragments 54a-b, ed. A. Pertusi, *Giorgio di Pisidiea poemi. Vol. 1, Panegirici epici* (Ettal, 1959), 276–92, at 292.

would therefore proclaim, on the temporal plane, the emperor's dramatic removal of the Persians from the Levant and, on the cosmological plane, a new historical era of renewal.

It is probable that the emperor and his entourage were also aware of the soteriological significance of the act. Even before the explosion of eschatological speculation that accompanied the rise and expansion of Islam, texts of the post-Justinianic period point to a widespread expectation that Christ's final advent was imminent.[34] It is impossible to ascertain whether the emperor was aware of that tradition (soon to be enshrined in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*), which predicted that a Last Roman Emperor would place his crown upon Golgotha, and thus effect the final age of man; it is possible that Heraclius instead inspired it.[35] But perhaps in the late 620s, under the patronage of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Sergius, Theophylact Simocatta had attributed to the Persian king Khusraw II a curious prediction: 'The Babylonian race will hold sway over the Roman state for three cycles of seven years. But after this, Romans will enslave Persians in the fifth cycle of seven years. When these things have happened, the day which has no evening will dwell amongst men, and the expected end will hold sway, when the things of destruction are dissolved, and those of the better life rule'.[36] This dramatic prediction was, no doubt, constructed after the fact, but its message to contemporaries was nevertheless clear: the emperor's campaigns against the Persians were waged on a cosmological scale; their completion would realise the advent of the eschaton.

Accounts of events at Jerusalem itself are few and confused, but nevertheless lend the impression of an imperial *adventus* on a scale to rival those of centuries past. According to the account of Ps.-Sebēos, the emperor arrived with an impressive retinue of soldiers and courtiers, bearing the Cross and certain sacred vessels that had previously been removed to the capital. His procession into the capital was accompanied by 'an outpouring of lamentation, wailing and tears' inspired in 'the terrible fervour of the compassion of their [the inhabitants'] hearts, and the gut-wrenching grief of the emperor, the princes, all the soldiers

34. See, e.g., Eustratius Presbyter, *The Life of Golinduch*, chap. 15, ed. (in Latin trans. from Georgian) G. Garitte, 'La passion géorgienne de sainte Golindouch', *Analecta Bollandia* 74 (1956), 405–40, at 437; Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba* 18 [Houze, 117]. For the political context of eschatological speculation see P. Magdalino, 'The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda', in R. Beaton and C. Roueché (eds.), *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol* (Aldershot, 1993), 3–34.

35. For the myth of the last Roman emperor, see esp. Ps.-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, ed. G. J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (Leuven, 1993), with P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley CA, 1985), 151–84. On apocalyptic in the wake of the Arab invasions R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997), 257–335.

36. Theophylact Simocatta, *History* 5.15, ed. C. De Boor and P. Wirth, *Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae* (Stuttgart, 1972), 216f.

and the inhabitants of the city'.[37] The actual restoration, however, appears to have been prefaced with a dramatic mise en scène, for Nicephorus reports that Heraclius presented the sealed relic—which had been 'preserved just as it had been taken'—to the patriarchal *locum tenens* Modestus, who then proclaimed the seal to be intact, the relic within 'untouched and unseen by the profane and murderous hands of the barbarians'.[38] The theatrics are perhaps explained by the desire to avoid explaining the desecration of the Cross, but Cyril Mango has suggested that the confirmation of the relic's intactness represented something far grander: an act of rapprochement that proclaimed both the new political alliance of the Roman and Persian empires and their imminent spiritual unification in Christ—Shahr-Barāz's son and designated successor, the patrician Nicetas, was a Christian.[39]

Two Poems on the Restitution of the Cross

The multiple levels of potential historical and eschatological meaning that Heraclius's restoration of the Cross to Jerusalem presented to contemporaries are perhaps best expressed in a poem composed to celebrate the occasion. George of Pisidia's *On the Restoration of the Cross* compares the entrance of the emperor into Jerusalem to the entrance of Christ: 'Prepare new palm branches', it commands Golgotha, 'for the meeting of the new victor (*πρὸς τὴν ἀπαντὴν τοῦ νέου νικηφόρου*)'.[40] 'Now, O Emperor', it proclaims, 'you hold the power of mystical rule amongst us, and all the country, city, and the cosmos exalts with one voice the grace bestowed upon you'.[41] George summons the emperor Constantine to appear once again in Rome to praise his successor, who has surpassed his own achievement. Constantine, he claims, recovered the Cross at Jerusalem; Heraclius, however, has recovered the Cross from the furnaces of Persia, and restored it once again to its proper place. The emperor is also a new David, restoring to Jerusalem a powerful relic, and his enemies perceive his Cross 'as a new ark, but more than the ark, for the one so far as weapons dealt wounds to the barbarians, but the power of the Cross dispatched against them weapons which were alive'.[42]

37. Ps.-Sebēos, *History* 41 [Abgaryan, 131]. Cf. Strategius, *On the Fall of Jerusalem*, 24 [Garitte. *La prise*, 2:55], which also places the empress Martina in the imperial retinue. Cyril Mango has suggested that Jerusalem's Golden Gate might well have been constructed for the occasion; see 'The Temple Mount AD 614–638', in J. Raby and J. Johns (eds.), *Bayt al-Maqdis: ʿAbd al-Malik's Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1992), 1–16, at 7–16.

38. Nicephorus, *Short History* 18 [Mango, 66].

39. See Mango, 'Deux études', 105–17. For the relic's intactness, see also Strategius *On the Fall of Jerusalem*, 24 [Garitte, *La prise*, 2:55] (contradicting his earlier report of Christians' being forced to trample upon it).

40. George of Pisidia, *On the Restoration of the Cross*, 7–8 [Pertusi, 225].

41. Ibid. 43–6 [Pertusi, 227].

42. Ibid. 73–7 [Pertusi, 228].

For George, the restoration of the Cross is an act of universal restoration, news of which was received in Constantinople 'on an appropriate occasion', for it was announced at the Feast of Lazarus, with all its associations of resurrection.[43]

The restoration of the Cross at Jerusalem was, therefore, a multivalent event that proclaimed to contemporaries both an era of renewal and an imminent eschaton. Heraclius was presented as a new David, a warrior king restoring to Jerusalem a sacred relic; a new Constantine, honouring the Cross and (re-)establishing the eastern Christian empire; and, perhaps, the Last Roman Emperor, precipitating the advent of Christ.[44] Ps.-Sebēos, Nicephorus, and George of Pisidia present the occasion as one of universal Christian celebration, a dramatic and finite affirmation of the Christian empire and its fundamental place within the providential scheme of God.

An anacreontic poem of Sophronius nevertheless presents the Cross' restoration in a rather different manner. The poem *On the Holy Cross* appears to have been composed soon after the restitution, for it opens on a note of evident relief: 'The time of the impious has passed—rejoice good faith! The cloud of the godless has lifted—lyre, celebrate our joy in song!'[45] The presentation of the Persians here repeats that of the poem *On the Capture of Jerusalem*, for the subsequent stanza speaks of 'the doom of Babylon', 'races of the impious', and 'peoples of the lawless'.[46] There is however a substantial difference, for where that earlier piece had conceived of the Persian devastation of Jerusalem as the triumph of demonic rage against a blessed, blameless people, *On the Holy Cross* situates events in a different, more developed, interpretative frame. 'God came forth to punish dreadful sins', Sophronius opines. '[But then] God came forth to save, brimming with pitiful compassion'.[47] The invaders here are conceived as the agents not of demonic but of divine anger, for it was Christ who allowed them 'to despoil his own city'.[48] The Persian, therefore, is 'God-sent' (θεήλατος), and the cause of Jerusalem's devastation is presented not as demonic evil, but as collective Christian sin.[49]

43. Ibid. 101–13 [Pertusi, 229]. For the emperor Heraclius's association with David, see also S. S. Alexander, 'Heraclius, Byzantine Imperial Ideology and the David Plates', *Speculum* 52 (1977),) 217–37.

44. On these various levels of symbolism, see also Mango, 'Deux études'; Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:312–319, and esp. J. W. Drijvers, 'Heraclius and the *Restitutio Crucis*: Notes on Symbolism and Ideology', in G. J. Reinink and B. H. Stolte (eds.), *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Leuven, 2002), 175–90. On George of Pisidia, see the various contributions of Mary Whitby, esp. 'Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and His Deputies' in Mary Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1998), 247–73.

45. Sophronius, *On the Holy Cross* 1–2, ed. M. Gigante, *Sophronii Anacreontica* (Rome, 1957) 114–7, at 114.

46. Ibid. 5–8 [Gigante, 114].

47. Ibid. 17–20 [Gigante, 114f.].

48. Ibid. 32 [Gigante, 115].

49. Ibid. 36 [Gigante, 115].

The conceptualisation of events as a manifestation of divine punishment for sin became, in Palestinian circles, the dominant mode of interpretation. The Sabaite monk Strategius's narrative *On the Fall of Jerusalem* time and again points to collective sin as the cause of Christian reversals,[50] although he—like other contemporaries confronted with large-scale catastrophes—struggles to reconcile the mass fate of a large population to the notion of divine providence.[51] Dramatic reversals demanded explanation, and the simplistic, dichotomised perspective of Sophronius's *On the Capture of Jerusalem* could not explain the failure of God to protect his chosen people. Persian success challenged Christian claims to God's special favour, and demanded the readjustment of triumphalist narratives to account for defeat. Contemporaries therefore explained that defeat as divine punishment for collective Christian sin. From this perspective, the devastation of Jerusalem was not the manifestation of Persian triumph but of Christian failure.[52]

It has been suggested that the conception of Roman defeat as the consequence of shared sin was a political convenience for the emperor Heraclius, for it shifted attention from explanations conceived in terms of his own moral or political failures to those which placed the burden of responsibility upon the entire Christian community.[53] That is no doubt correct, but I would suggest that the same explanation had a further consequence less apposite to imperial ideology, for it rendered ambiguous the role and position of the emperor in the process of restoration. In the poem *On the Capture of Jerusalem*, Sophronius's call for vengeance presupposed imperial involvement as the instrument of divine vengeance. By internalising the causes of crisis in the later poem *On the Holy Cross*, however, he imagined restoration not in militaristic vengeance but in moral reversal. In the scheme of collective sin, therefore, the emperor must either become the moral redeemer of the broader community or be irrelevant.

The consequences of this perspective can perhaps be observed in subsequent sections of Sophronius's poem *On the Holy Cross*. As we have seen, in George of Pisidia's comparable piece, the emperor remains the constant focus of attention; he is a new David, a new Constantine; the agent of both temporal and cosmological renewal. In contrast, Sophronius reduces the emperor's significant role in the Persian campaigns to that of a mere observer. He describes how

50. See, e.g., Strategius, *On the Fall of Jerusalem*, e.g. 1–2 [Garitte, *La prise*, 2:1–5]. On the same theme see Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba* 7 [Houze, 129].

51. See, e.g., the letter of Zachariah (supposedly) preserved in Strategius, *On the Fall of Jerusalem* 22 [Garitte, *La prise*, 2:46–50], and esp. the discussion in *De Persica Captivitate Opusculum* [*PG* 86:2, 3236C–3240A].

52. On the theme of human sin and divine punishment more broadly in this period, see esp. Flusin, *Anastase le Perse*, 2:129–49; D. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia, 1994).

53. See esp. Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 44.

the Cross, upon arrival in Ctesiphon, killed Khusraw, causing the wielder of the sword to die himself 'through murderous swords'.[54] 'Then', Sophronius claims, 'the seed of peace spread over all the land', and 'under the glorious peace that went out to mortals from God, the son of great Rome (*μεγάλης πάϊς Ῥώμης*) indeed rejoiced most mightily'.[55] Now those citizens who had fled from the cities of their fathers through fear of persecution returned. 'And let the blame of the monstrous Hebrews be turned upon their heads', the poem concludes. 'For the wood of God has come into the city of God. The Cross has come into the land of the pious! Rejoice races of pious men!'[56]

George of Pisidia had imagined Heraclius in the role of grand redeemer. In comparison, Sophronius reduces the role of Heraclius in the Cross' restoration to a single, ephemeral reference. Where his Constantinopolitan counterpart presents the emperor as the sole agent of peace, Sophronius attributes that peace to the sacred power of the Cross itself, and to God's implied compassion for previous sin. The differences in presentation are partly explained by the different perspectives and rhetorical ends of the poets: as a Constantinopolitan panegyricist, George emphasised the central position of the emperor; as a provincial ascetic and homilist, Sophronius instead focused on the Cross' 'devotional and soteriological rather than its public and political significance'.[57] That Sophronius chose to minimise the political aspects of the Cross' return nevertheless seems significant. His recognition of Heraclius's achievement is muted, and although the tone is one of exultation, the grand claims to cosmological renewal are conspicuously absent. It is understandable that Sophronius, an exile from Palestine since the reign of Phocas, might prove unwilling to invest in the exaggerated rhetoric of his Constantinopolitan counterpart. The return of the Cross to Jerusalem was, of course, a cause for celebration, but its political and cosmological significance remained to be seen.

Indeed, in a letter written to a correspondent in the capital c. 629 Sophronius's disciple Maximus referred to the peace in terms that were far from triumphalist and that sought to place the emperor's achievement in its proper perspective. Therein he refers to 'news of a peace on earth' (*εἰρήνης κοσμικῆς εὐαγγελία*), which is a cause for celebration and thanks to God. Nevertheless, he states, 'having used the peace as we should, and having set aside the fondness which

54. Sophronius, *On the Holy Cross* 55–64 [Gigante, 116].

55. Ibid. 73–6 [Gigante, 117].

56. Ibid. 89–90 [Gigante, 117].

57. A. Cameron, 'Byzantium and the Past in the Seventh Century: The Search for Redefinition', in J. Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth (eds.), *The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity* (London, 1992), 250–76, at 264, repr. A. Cameron, *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1996).

wickedly exists in us for the world and for its ruler (*καὶ τὴν πρὸς κόσμον καὶ τὸν κοσμοκράτορα κακῶς ἡμῖν ἐννυπάρξασαν ἀθετήσαντες φιλίαν*), let us end the war which has been stirred up against God through the passions, even if it is now late'.[58] For Maximus here, therefore, Heraclius's triumph in war was not the occasion for retreat into admiration for the emperor; it was a prompt to renew that greater war against the passions which had fomented God's anger in the first place. Like Sophronius, Maximus invests in the rhetoric of sin and political disaster; but like Sophronius again, he is cautious to equate political restoration with forgiveness.

The Monenergist Crisis

Before his return to Constantinople, Heraclius congratulated the patriarchal locum tenens Modestus for his reconstruction of Jerusalem's churches and elevated him to the patriarchate.[59] He then distributed imperial largesse to the communities of the Judean desert, reviving a traditional form of imperial euergetism that appears to have lapsed after the reign of the emperor Maurice.[60] It is evident, however, that the establishment of peace, and the concomitant retreat of the Persians from the eastern provinces did not precipitate a flood of expatriated Palestinian monks returning to their former province. While Sophronius himself appears to have returned from the Latin West in around 630, perhaps for the restoration of the Cross, others remained in exile. Thus, Maximus Confessor in 632 composed a letter from North Africa *To the Monk Sophronius*, in which he expressed his desire to be received once again under his master's protection, 'if truly all fear of actual barbarians has passed, on whose account I made so long a voyage, in fear of my life'.[61] For Maximus, therefore, grand imperial claims to restoration and renewal did not translate into confidence in a stable or permanent peace.

It is impossible to ascertain when Sophronius and Maximus became aware of Constantinopolitan investigations into the nascent doctrine of monenergism. The precise beginnings of those manoeuvres are to some extent shrouded

58. Maximus, *Letters* 24 [PG 91 608C-609A]. Cf. later in the same: '[T]here will be no benefit for us from peace on earth while the soul is badly disposed, in revolt against our own maker, and refusing to live under his kingdom' [PG 91 609AB].

59. For Modestus's elevation to the patriarchate in March 630, see Strategius, *On the Fall of Jerusalem* 24 [Garitte, *La prise* 2:55]; Eutychius, *Annals* 30 [Breydy 129]; *Translation of the Relics of Anastasius the Persian*, ed. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 1:99–107, at 101.

60. See *Translation of the Relics of Anastasius the Persian* 1 [Flusin, 99]; cf. Eutychius, *Annals*, 30 [Breydy, 129f.]. Sebēos, *History*, 40, also refers to the emperor's distribution of alms.

61. Maximus Confessor, *Letters* 8, ed. *PG* 91, 440C–445B, at 445A. For the date of the letter, see R. Devreesse, 'La fin inédite d'une lettre de Saint Maxime: Un baptême forcé de Juifs et de Samaritans à Carthage en 632', *Revues des sciences religieuses* 17 (1937), 25–35.

in later polemic, but it appears that from about 620 Heraclius had instructed the Constantinopolitan patriarch Sergius to explore the doctrine of the one operation in Christ as a potential basis for the reconciliation of those anti-Chalcedonian (perhaps also Nestorian) communities now under Persian rule or occupation.[62] Following his dramatic triumph in 628, Heraclius was in a strong position to effect that doctrinal compromise. Theophanes, Michael the Syrian, and the *Anonymous Chronicle to 1234* report a meeting at Hierapolis/Mabbug (c.630) in which the emperor attempted to bring into communion the anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius the Camel Driver, on the basis of a monenergist formula, although the success of the venture is obscured by the doctrinal biases of those authors who describe it.[63] In the same period (c.631), several Armenian authors claim that, under imperial persuasion, the Armenian catholicos Ezr entered into union with Constantinople,[64] and the Nestorian *Chronicle of Seert* places at Aleppo a doctrinal accord between Heraclius and the catholicos Ishoʿyahb, at which the emperor even received communion from the archbishop's hands.[65]

In June 633 the exponents of the emergent monenergist doctrine achieved another spectacular success. At Alexandria, the Chalcedonian patriarch Cyrus had entered into communion with moderate anti-Chalcedonians ('Theodosians'), and had included in the shared confession of faith a conspicuous

62. For the origins of the doctrine, see the influential account given in the *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, ed. *PG* 91, 288A–353B, at 332B–33B. For supporting documents, see also the collected references in Winkelmann, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, and Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 23–34.

63. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* [Chabot, 4:409f.]; *Anonymous Chronicle to 1234* 103 [Chabot, 1:238]; Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6121; *Chronicle of Seert* 88 [Scher, PO 13, 544–5]. Anastasius Sinaita, *Against the Monotheletes*, 1, ed. K. H. Uthemann, *Sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem dei* (Turnhout, 1985), 55–83, at 56, places the same meeting at Antioch. For the date—before the death of Athanasius in 631—see Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 312, n.81, contra Winkelmann, *Die monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, 61–3 no. 24/24a. On the disquiet caused by the potential union in Chalcedonian circles, see also Eubulus of Lystra *Against the libellus of Athanasius to the Emperor Heraclius*, ed. F. Diekamp, *Doctrina Patrum de incarnation Verbi. Ein griechisches Florilegium aus der Wende des 7. Und 8. Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 1907), 141–8, and amongst the monks of Palestine, Antiochus Monachus, *Pandects* 130 [*PG* 89 1843BC].

64. For a meeting between Ezr and Heraclius: Ps.-Sebēos, *History* 41 [Abgaryan, 131f.]; John Drasxanakertcʿi, *History of Armenia* 18, ed. M. Emin, *Yovhannu ʿkatʿoghikosi Drasxanakertcʿwoy Patmutʿiwn Hoyocʿ* (Moscow, 1883; repr. Tiflis, 1912; repr. *Hovhannēs Draskhanakertetsʿi, Patmutʿiwn Hayotsʿ: A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1912 Tiflis Edition* (New York, 1980), at 77). For a council at Theodosiopolis, *Narratio de rebus Armeniae* 121–2, ed. G. Garitte, *La Narratio de rebus Armeniae* (Leuven, 1952), 43, with extensive commentary and further Georgian and Armenian evidence at 278–350.

65. *Chronicle of Seert* 93, in Scher, PO 13, 557–559. For discussion of this meeting—prefaced with a dispatch from Ctesiphon of the Nestorian bishop Elias, described at *Translation of the Relics of Anastasius the Persian* 2–3 [Flusin, 99–101]—see Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:319–27. For the history of monenergism/monotheletism in the Antiochene fathers, see Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, 9–15.

monenergist formula.[66] The reconciliation, however, attracted the attention of Sophronius, who had, in the past, represented the Alexandrian patriarch John the Almsgiver in disputations with Egyptian anti-Chalcedonians, and whom he had characterised in his *Miracles of Cyrus of John*, somewhat hypocritically, as hopelessly intransigent.[67] In a later letter to the Roman pope Honorius, the Constantinopolitan patriarch Sergius described how Sophronius 'was in Alexandria at the time and in the company of the aforementioned most holy pope (*κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξανδρέων τηνικαῦτα γενόμενος καὶ τῷ ῥηθέντι ἁγιωτάτῳ πάπα συνών*)' and how, when he examined the profession of faith, took exception to the proclamation of a single operation in Christ.[68] Maximus Confessor too describes the dramatic scene: 'Therefore the divine and great Sophronius then came to Alexandria, and, from the very first reading—for Cyrus had even given to him those nine impious chapters for approval—he let out a great cry of grief, poured forth torrents of tears, and spread himself out on the ground at his [Cyrus's] feet, fervently begging, beseeching, and demanding that he proclaim none of these things from the pulpit against the universal Church; for he said that these were clearly the impious doctrines of Apollinarius'.[69]

Despite the Alexandrian patriarch's reported appeals to accommodation for the sake of communion, Sophronius now travelled to the imperial capital to intervene in person with the patriarch Sergius, perhaps unaware of the latter's position as principal architect of the monenergist compromise.[70] In his aforementioned letter to pope Honorius, Sergius claimed that, during discussions, Sophronius proved incapable of supporting his position with patristic attestation to the 'two operations', but the Constantinopolitan patriarch nevertheless offered a remarkable concession, and attempted to defuse the potential crisis by banning discussion on the operations. Sophronius agreed to the solution, and when Heraclius from Edessa then ordered Sergius to compose a florilegium of

66. See *Pact of Union*, ed. R. Riedinger, *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, ser. 2, vol. 2/2, 594–600, at 598, repr. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 168–72.

67. For Moschus and Sophronius as John the Almsgiver's doctrinal disputants, see Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver* 5, 31 [Festugière, 350–3, 357–9]. For Sophronius's derogatory statements, see *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, 39, ed. N. Marcos, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio: Contribución al Estudio de La Incubatio Cristiana* (Madrid, 1975) 337, with some further invective preserved in Anastasius Bibliothecarius's Latin at *PG* 87:3, 3574AB.

68. Sergius, *Letter to Honorius* [Riedinger, 538; Allen, 186]. It is this same phrase of Dionysius that Sophronius defended in his *Synodical Letter*, ed. R. Riedinger, *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, ser. 2, vol. 2/1, 410–94, at 456, repr. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 66–156, at 114.

69. Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula* 12, ed. *PG* 91, 141A–146A, at 143CD.

70. See Sergius, *Letter to Honorius* [Riedinger, 540; Allen, 186–8]. Sophronius's appeal before Sergius is also referred to in *Disputation with Pyrrhus* [*PG* 91, 333AB]. For the principle of *οἰκονομία*, or its rejection, as a central guiding principle of the two opposing sides in the subsequent crisis, see Ohme, 'Oikonomia im monenergetisch-monotheletischen Streit'.

monenergist citations, the patriarch composed a polite report that explained to the emperor the emergent opposition and his attempts to suppress it. Heraclius, no doubt deflated, conceded.[71]

In a recent article Karl-Heinz Uthemann has demonstrated the organic development of discussion on the energies from neo-Chalcedonian speculation of the preceding decades.[72] Although the issue of the Christological energies was in the air, it should not be supposed that the theological opposition to monenergism was a logical consequence of orthodox Chalcedonian doctrine, for both sides in the dispute discovered meagre patristic support for their positions, and there was no developed, Chalcedonian consensus on the issue.[73] That same opposition must therefore be considered as the *formation* of a theological position, not as a requisite extension of pre-existent, 'orthodox' Chalcedonian doctrine. This does not mean that doctrinal arguments were, in effect, irrelevant, a mere rhetorical gloss on other, more 'real' motivations. We must instead recognise that perceptions of doctrinal difference, and the subsequent elaboration of the theological opposition, were informed by an intellectual *and* a political context, and that the reception of monenergism in Palestinian circles was determined as much by the immediate experience of disaster as by the doctrinal imperatives of the past.[74] Thus, just as the elaboration and promotion of Chalcedonian monenergism cannot be separated from its political implications or purpose, the articulation of its doctrinal opposite cannot be separated from the experiences and political perceptions of those Palestinian intellectuals who developed it.

A letter of Maximus Confessor illustrates the point. At some point in the 620s (using a conventional dating) Maximus replied to a letter of the Constantinopolitan official John Cubicularius, a letter that had put to its recipient a controversial question: 'How is it that God has judged it right that men be ruled by other men?'[75] Maximus replies that the Fall introduced an unnatural disorder into both man and the entire cosmos. As we cherish this wretched life even

71. Sergius, *Letter to Honorius* [Riedinger, 546; Allen, 192].

72. Uthemann, 'Der Neuchalkedonismus als Vorbereitung'. Cf. Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, 15–41, on the background within Severan Christological debates.

73. As acknowledged in Sergius, *Letter to Honorius* [Riedinger, 540–4; Allen 188–90], though pointing to a complete dearth of support for dyenergism. For the nascent nature of discussions, see also Maximus Confessor, *Letters* 19, addressed with deference in 634 to the future arch-monothelete Pyrrhus, praising Sergius's *Psephos*, and asking for clarification on the meaning of 'operation' and other related words. Maximus would later regret the letter; see Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula*, 9.

74. This becomes particularly important if one believes that there was no essential doctrinal difference between monenergist and dyenergist thought; see, e.g., R. Price, 'Monotheletism: A Heresy or a Form of Words?', *Studia Patristica* 48 (2010), 221–32.

75. Maximus Confessor, *Letters* 10, ed. *PG* 91 449A–453A, at 449A (as reported question). On this letter, see also D. J. Sahas, 'The Demonizing Force of the Arab Conquests. The Case of Maximus (*ca* 580–662) as a Political "Confessor"', *Jahrbuch der Österrichischen Byzantinistik* 53 (2003), 97–116.

amidst our sufferings, Maximus states, God has conceived the law of rule over men (*τὸν τῆς βασιλείας τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νόμον*), so that we do not become 'like the fishes of the sea, killing each other without discrimination'.[76] He has thus permitted men, although otherwise equal in nature, to be divided into ruler and ruled, so that, in this, He might both marshal those who are obedient to the laws of nature and punish those who, in their arrogance, refuse to acknowledge them, thus maintaining righteousness through reason and fear. For Maximus, therefore, 'whichever ruler (*βασιλεύς*) endeavours to maintain the law of rulership in this way truly is revealed as the lieutenant (*δεύτερος*) of God upon earth, as a most pious servant of the divine will, who, as a righteous heir of rule from God, rules also over men'.[77] 'But', Maximus concludes, 'whichever [ruler] has rebutted this law and has deigned to rule for himself and not for God will no doubt bring about the opposite of these things. In his tyranny (*τυραννικῶς*) he will shake from himself good men and will set himself far apart from all council and co-rule (*βουλῆς και δυναστείας*). Then he will draw to himself the wicked and establish them as the lords of his entire domain. This is the final pit of destruction for both rulers and ruled. Let God provide that we be ruled willingly by him, through the fulfilment of his life-giving commandments, and that we worthily honour those who rule in his name on earth, as guardians of his divine ordinances'.[78]

Maximus's vision of the emperor's temporal role is, to some extent, traditional. In the pattern of post-Eusebian *Kaiserkritik*, he presents the emperor as a divine vicegerent on earth, a pious ruler whose terrestrial function consists in the maintenance of peace and the elevation of the ruled towards God (though not in the espousal of doctrinal diktats). In contrast to most political commentators, however, Maximus also explores the converse of that vision. The ruler who himself neglects to observe God's ordinances cannot also maintain them in his empire; he will gather to himself the wicked and corrupt, and he will drag down all to eternal damnation. The condition of the empire is, therefore, the moral measure of the emperor himself.[79]

It is this complex association of imperial virtue and temporal peace that, I suggest, partly informs the formation of the Palestinian opposition to imperial monenergism. Both Sophronius and Maximus appear to have demonstrated a distinct ambivalence towards Heraclian claims to temporal success, even at the moment of the emperor's greatest triumph. It is unsurprising, therefore, that, as Sophronius hesitated over the emperor's proclaimed restoration, news of the

76. Maximus Confessor, *Letters* 10 [*PG* 91 452A].

77. Ibid. [*PG* 91 452D].

78. Ibid. [*PG* 91 452D–453A].

79. For discussion of this political philosophy and its relation to that of collective sin, see Olster, *Roman Defeat*, esp. 30–50.

emperor's irenic doctrinal initiatives amidst, and even communion with, the anti-Chalcedonians—based at least in part upon an untested formula—elicited a violent response and the development of a doctrine that aimed to undo those same initiatives. Palestinian observers had long drawn an association between disaster and sin, and, as Sophronius's suspicions of Heraclius's claims to restoration were confirmed in the face of further reversals, so did the sin that allowed it assume a more concrete, doctrinal form. Maximus's vision of the sinful emperor dragging his people to perdition had, for some at least, now been realised.

Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem

It is impossible to know at what stage Sophronius and Maximus became aware of the expansion of Islam in and beyond Arabia, an expansion contemporaneous with the opening salvos of the monenergist crisis.[80] Towards the end of his life the prophet Muhammad demonstrated an interest in expansion into the Levant, and in the late 620s several Islamic raiding parties had pressed upon the Roman east. In late 633, however, the caliph Abū Bakr had launched a more ambitious campaign and, after the capitulation of several towns in southern Palestine, in February 634 Muslim soldiers utterly defeated a Roman force near Gaza, leaving the Palestinian countryside open to the Muslims.[81]

Although we cannot, for the crucial months between June 633 and the initial losses in southern Palestine, evaluate Sophronius's awareness of the Arab invaders' victories over Roman forces—and with them the dramatic unraveling of the Heraclian ideological edifice—it was no coincidence that Heraclius's programme of doctrinal reunion came undone precisely at the time that his programme of political reunion, with all its claims of cosmological renewal, was shown to be vapid. As Maximus had made clear in his earlier *Letters*, the condition of the empire was the moral measure of the emperor and, from this perspective, Heraclius must have appeared a mortal sinner. It was the Arab success that finally confirmed the suspicions of Sophronius and his circle as to the heretical nature of the emperor's doctrinal initiatives, and solidified their resistance to them.

Upon his accord with the patriarch Sergius regarding the emergent Christological dispute on the operations, Sophronius travelled to Rome, in order to

80. I doubt the assertion that Maximus's *Letters* 8 [*PG* 91, 444A], in which he discusses the etymology of 'Arabia', can be read as evidence for an awareness of Arab incursions in 632; see, e.g., W. E. Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003), 218; (confusing *Letters* 8 and 14); Boudignon, 'Maxime le confesseur', 18–21.

81. For these early campaigns, see the critical reconstruction of J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010) 373f., 465f.; also F. M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), 111–48; W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992), 88–111.

collect the remains of his spiritual mentor John Moschus. He then travelled east to inter those remains in Palestine and arrived at Ascalon, according to the anonymous prologue attached to certain manuscripts of Moschus's hagiographic oeuvre, the *Spiritual Meadow*, 'at the beginning of the eighth indiction', that is, in September 634.[82] He then retired to the Monastery of Theodosius in the Judean desert, but was soon afterwards elevated to the vacant patriarchal throne of Jerusalem. In his subsequent *Synodical Letter*, the new patriarch attributed his election to 'the great pressure and force' which the city's clerics, monks, and laymen applied to him, and it is probable that his election was intended to end the round of consecrations that had taken place under the monenergist Sergius of Joppa, an imperial appointment and locum tenens since the death of Modestus in 630.[83] Confronted with the Arab armies now menacing Jerusalem itself, the continued lack of a patriarch had no doubt had become more unacceptable. 'The Saracens', Sophronius observed in his *Synodical Letter*, 'have unexpectedly risen up against us because of our sins and plundered everything with savage, brutal mind and foul, godless daring'.[84]

Sophronius's first imperatives as patriarch, therefore, were to comfort his congregation, explain the Arab presence, and defend Christian claims to divine favour.[85] On Christmas Day 634, at the Church of the Theotokos in Jerusalem,

82. *Prologue to the Spiritual Meadow* [Usener 93].

83. See Sophronius, *Synodical Letter* [Riedinger, 414; Allen, 70]. Sophronius states that his election was performed 'on whose authority I do not know', and Sergius, *Letter to Honorius*, states that he had heard of Sophronius's election as patriarch only by hearsay [Riedinger, 538]. It is possible, therefore, that he was elected without imperial approval. Cf. Eutychius, *Annals* 31 [Breydy, 134f.]: 'Sophronius came to Jerusalem from Constantinople. The monks and the inhabitants of Jerusalem went out to meet him, and he informed them of what had happened. And, as there was then no patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius was charged with the patriarchal office, on account of his orthodoxy'. For the appointment of Sergius of Joppa 'by secular authority' (*ἀπό κοσμικῆς ἐξουσίας*) after the withdrawal of the Persians, see Stephen of Dora, *Libellum = Acts of the Lateran Synod* [Riedinger, 46]. For Sergius's irregular appointments before, during, and after the patriarchate of Sophronius, see Pope Martin, *Letter to John of Philadelphia*, in PL 87 159AB. Cf. also Pope Martin, *Letter to Pantaleon* [*PL* 87 172BD]. The presence of pro-monenergist/monothelete parties in Palestine is also indicated by the Syriac *Life* of Maximus Confessor, whose author was a Palestinian bishop and devotee of Sophronius but also a monothelete. For discussion of the monenergist/monothelete party in Palestine, see esp. Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 85–9; Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:359–362.

84. Sophronius, *Synodical Letter* [Riedinger, 492; Allen, 154].

85. For Sophronius's sermons in modern translation, see A. Gallico, *Sofronio di Gerusalemme: Le omelie* (Rome, 1991); J. de la Ferrière and M.-H. Congourdeau, *Sophrone de Jérusalem. Fêtes chréttiennes à Jérusalem* (Paris, 1999) (not seen). For further works attributed to the patriarchal period: S. Heid, 'Eine erbauliche Erzählung des Sophronios von Jerusalem (BHG 1641b) über der kirchliche Binde-und Lösegewalt über Verstorbene', in W. Blumer et al. (eds.), *Alvarium: Festschrift für Christian Glinke* (Munster, 2002), 151–72; J. Duffy, 'New Fragments of Sophronius of Jerusalem and Aristo of Pella?', in D. Bumazhnov et al. (eds.), *Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient*: *Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 187 (Louvain, forthcoming). I am very grateful to John Duffy for an advanced copy of this article. Studies of the patriarchal sermons are few, but see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 67–76, and esp. Olster, *Roman Defeat*.

he delivered a sermon *On the Nativity*, in which he expressed his urgent desire 'to go to the God-bearing manger' at Bethlehem, 'to approach the heavenly grotto', and 'to see the mystery which appeared in it'; but, he added, '[t]hrough our sins we have become unworthy of seeing such things, and we look to travel there but are forced to stay at home, not constrained by chains of the body but bound by fear of the Saracens'.[86] Sophronius compared the alienation of his congregation from Bethlehem to Moses' destined failure to enter Israel [Deut. 3:27], to David's powerlessness to drink from the pool at Bethlehem [II Sam. 23:15], and to the expulsion of Adam from Paradise. For, just as the exiled Adam saw 'a flaming and wheeling sword watching the entrance to paradise', so the Christians of Jerusalem see 'that of the Saracen, wild and barbarous and full of all diabolic savagery, which threatens us with fear and death and makes us exiles from the blessed sight, and forces us to stay at home and does not allow us to go forth'.[87] Sophronius, therefore, repeats that equation between temporal disaster and collective Christian sin that he had earlier established in relation to the Persian occupation. The scheme is nevertheless more elaborate, for here that sin has inaugurated a new Fall, manifested in the inability of the Jerusalemites to experience Christ both physically at Bethlehem and spiritually in their lives. The Arab occupation is the terrestrial manifestation of Christian sin, a physical expression of the soteriological barrier between Christ and mankind.

The urgent need for Christian restoration is the dominant theme of Sophronius's sermons. He conceives the realisation of that restoration through three means: doctrinal, moral, and liturgical. The moral integrity of the community first of all presupposes a strict Chalcedonian orthodoxy, primarily defined in opposition to a vast catalogue of external pollutants (though avoiding overt discussion of the Christological energies, banned in Sergius's *Psephos*).[88] Within that context of doctrinal purity, individual members of the community must strive to adopt the virtues and thus, in imitation of Christ, to accord the human will with that of the divine. In the same sermon *On the Nativity*, therefore, Sophronius summons his audience to 'join faith with deeds and never reckon it

86. Sophronius, *On the Nativity* 3, ed. H. Usener, 'Weihnachtspredigt des Sophronios', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 41 (1886), 500–16, at 506. For this connection between Christian sin and Arab invasion, see also Maximus Confessor, *Letters* 14, ed. *PG* 91, 533B–544C, at 541BC: 'What, as I said, is more terrifying to the eyes or ears of Christians than these things? To see a cruel, portentous race conniving to stretch out its hands against the divine inheritance. But these things happened because of the great number of our sins, for we did not live our lives worthily according to the Gospel of Christ'.

87. Ibid. [Usener, 507].

88. See the vast catalogue of heretics set out in Sophronius, *Synodical Letter* [Riedinger, 476–84; Allen, 136–48], with the analysis of Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem*, 54–62. A smaller but comparable catalogue can be found in *On the Hypapante* 6, ed. H. Usener, *De praesentatione Domini sermo* (Bonn, 1889), 13f.

naught apart from the deeds to which it is joined, so that as mighty in faith we stand firm and are never be harmed by the grace of God'. '[I]f we shall do his will, which comes from his Father', Sophronius claims, 'having true and orthodox faith we will blunt the Ishmaelite sword, turn away the Saracen knife, and break the Arab bow, then in no short time we shall see the heavenly Jerusalem and behold the miracles in it, and look upon the thaumaturge Christ himself'.[89] Later in the sermon he returns to the same theme: 'Therefore I summon and urge and beseech you to desire for Christ God, so that, whatever our power, we might reform ourselves and take pride in repentance, and, in that atonement, purify and curb the flow of deeds that are hateful to God. For if we live thus, as dear and pleasant to God, we might laugh at the fall of the Saracens who oppose us, soon enfeeble the ruin which they inflict and know their final destruction. For their blood-loving swords will enter into their own hearts, their bow will be shattered, and their own weapons will ensnare them, and they will provide for us a way free from fears'.[90]

Sophronius thus imagines a destruction of the Arabs achieved not in military action but in the doctrinal and moral restitution of the Christian collective. At the same time, he mitigates his congregation's inability to visit Bethlehem by substituting the physical encounter with Christ in the manger for a spiritual encounter with Christ through the virtues: 'God is displayed in a manger and turns himself into food for us who are deprived of reason and starving. Who would not delight in the Divinity and be made full of heavenly wisdom, and send away irrational luxury as unworthy of the banquet and grace of God?' In place of the gifts of the Magi, Sophronius summons his congregation to celebrate Christ with the virtues: 'I want to walk with them [the Magi]', he said, 'and to offer gifts to the new-born, even if he does not want those who offer gifts to him now to bring gold, myrrh, and frankincense, for he himself called the creator of all things instead furnishes the things we need, desiring instead of gold the brightness of faith, and wanting, instead of myrrh, the incorruptibility of the soul and of the body, but also of dogma, proclamation, and orthodox mind towards the faith; and in respect of frankincense he longs to receive from us the sweet smell and fragrance of good deeds, not so that he might be enriched in receiving these things but so that he might make us rich through these things'.[91] Sophronius imagines, therefore, a reciprocal enrichment through which the spiritual advancement of the participant is rewarded in the exaltation realised through Christ.

Indeed, this interaction between virtue and grace is fundamental to Sophronius's soteriological scheme and finds a further complement in his attitude to

89. Sophronius, *On the Nativity* 3 [Usener, 508].
90. Ibid. 9 [Usener, 508f.].
91. Ibid. 2 [Usener, 505f.].

ritual. Throughout the patriarchal homilies there is a consistent emphasis on the interaction of individual virtue and liturgical rite, in which the spiritual effect of that rite is relativised according to the moral condition of the participant.[92] The context in which moral effort is ultimately made relevant is the ecclesiastical liturgy, and throughout his sermons Sophronius insists on the regular participation of all Christians within the rites of the Church. The efficacy of liturgical acts in effecting the illumination to be realised fully in the eschaton is a constant theme, in particular in the sermon *On the Hypapante*.[93] 'Let us rightfully be initiated (*τελώμεθα*) in these things', the sermon proclaims. 'For they are the mystic rites (*τελεταὶ*) and mysteries of God, which, although accomplished (*ἐκτελούμενα*) by man, mystically bring the initiated (*τὸν τελούμενον*) to perfection (*τελειοῦντα*)'.[94] And again: 'But let us all run to meet him, thus piously honouring his mystery (*τὸ μυστήριον*); let us all enthusiastically proceed . . . let nobody halt the pious procession; let nobody be seen who has not tasted the festival; let nobody be seen who has not shared in the sacraments (*μηδεὶς φαινέσθω τῶν μυστηριῶν ἁμέτοχος*); let nobody be deprived of the light-bearing joy'.[95] Other routes to enlightenment are, in comparison, ineffective: '[D]o service to the sacraments (*τὰ μυστήρια*) of Christ as something dear to Christ. For he does not come forth to those who hasten to meet him by different means, nor does he suffer to see them with his eyes but makes them exiles from his own assembly and sets them as uninitiated in meeting him'.[96]

In the conclusion to the sermon *On the Theophany*, the patriarch considered the circumstances of the age: 'But contrary matters force me to ponder on our life. For how is it that our enemies live their lives amongst us? How is it that barbarian onslaughts multiply? How is it that the ranks of the Saracens rise up against us? . . . How is it that churches are destroyed? How is it that the cross is insulted?'[97] The patriarch continues to catalogue various (supposed) outrages

92. See, e.g., *On the Exaltation of the Cross* 5, ed. *PG* 87:3, 3301C–3309A, at 3308AB.

93. On this particular sermon, see the study of P. Allen, 'The Greek Homiletic Tradition of the Feast of the Hypapante: The Place of Sophronios of Jerusalem', in K. Belke et al. (eds.), *Byzantina Mediterranea: Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag* (Vienna, 2007), 1–12.

94. Sophronius, *On the Hypapante* 1 [Usener, 9].

95. Ibid. 4 [Usener, 10f.].

96. Ibid. 5 [Usener, 13]. The interest of Sophronius in liturgy is reflected not only in his own corpus—to which are attributed the sermons, several anacreontics on liturgical themes, certain liturgical hymns, and a liturgical prayer (see Schönborn, *Sophrone*, 99–109)—but also perhaps in the *Narration of Sophronius Patriarch of Jerusalem Concerning Those Who Do Not Recite the Ecclesiastical Office*, ed. Heid, 'Eine erbauliche Erzählung', 152–5; and the *Narration of Abbots John and Sophronius*, ed. A. Longo, 'Il testo integrale della *Narrazione degil abati Giovanni e Sofronio* attraverso le Hermêneiai di Nicone', *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 12-13 (1965–6), 223–67.

97. Sophronius, *On the Theophany* 10, ed. A. Papadopoulou-Kerameos, *Analekta Ierosolumitikēs Stachuologias*, 5 vols. (1888–97, repr. Brussels, 1963), 5:151–68, at 166.

committed at the hands of 'the god-hating and avenging Saracens' and notes the defeats inflicted upon Heraclius's armies[98] (from which one might assume that the sermon was delivered after the decisive Battle of Yarmuk, and thus in January 637).[99] Sophronius's solution, however, is simple: 'Thus, brothers, let us hasten with all speed towards redemption, and let us incline towards this [Christ's] sympathy. For it helps us to incline towards sympathy, on account of his natural and divine goodness, rather than to be stirred up towards cruelty and the punishment of the evils done against us. And so, knowing his philanthropy, let us run towards him with philanthropy, and let us delight him with good deeds, bearing clothes of light and bright garments of the soul . . . so that we also might come into his heavenly kingdom and thence have a share of the illumination, the enjoyment thus unshaken and alone fixed and unshaken'.[100] Here, then, Sophronius casts aside vengeance as an effective means of restoration. He instead summons his audience to a new moral purity realised through the structures of the Chalcedonian (dyenergist) Church, urging a Christian unity delimited by orthodoxy, defined by morality, and realised in liturgy.

In a compelling treatment of the patriarchal sermons, David Olster has argued that Sophronius 'offered hope by dissociating the empire from the Christian community and creating a new Christian identity that was Roman no longer'. Olster points to Sophronius's emphasis on liturgy as 'a social ritual that defined an extra-imperial communal, social and political identity'. Thus, 'Sophronius's call for unity in the face of the Arab threat was not to join together in resistance, either passive or active, but to express Christian unity through the liturgy'. At the same time, Olster indicates, '[i]t should not be thought remarkable that Sophronius would shape his sermons so that the unity and integrity of the Christian community found its source in the rites of the sole remaining Christian social and political institution'.[101]

One indeed senses in the patriarchal sermons something of a shift in emphasis. In all such sermons—and in perfect accord with the scheme of collective sin—Sophronius never hopes for an imperial, Roman resurgence to remove the Arab presence (such as he had first hoped for, some decades earlier, in response to the Persian assault on Jerusalem). Instead, he imagines restoration in the doctrinal, moral, and liturgical purification offered through the Church. Nevertheless, whereas in the sermon *On the Nativity* (written late in 634) Sophronius had fantasised an auto-destruction of the Arabs realised in the restoration of divine favour, and thus a simultaneous restoration of Roman rule, in the later sermon *On the Theophany* (written, it appears, after the defeat at Yarmuk)

98. Ibid. [Papadopoulou-Kerameos, 166f.].
99. Ibid. [Papadopoulou-Kerameos 166f.]. For the date, see Schönborn, *Sophrone* 104.
100. Ibid. 11 [Papadopoulou-Kerameos, 168].
101. Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 99–115.

all claims to *political* restoration are abandoned. Instead, he urges his audience to focus on the sustained illumination offered through the rites of the Church, 'alone fixed and unshaken'. Confronted with the Arab occupation, Sophronius urged upon his listeners an eschatological perspective that telescoped contemporary events in the grand scheme of sacred history, constructing those events as a recapitulation of, and participation in, scriptural precedent and holding out the promise of eventual salvation; he encouraged them to disregard their failure to encounter Christ in the temporal realm (at the place of his birth), and instead to approach him through the virtues; and he exhorted them to seek solace in the rituals and sacraments of the orthodox Church, 'alone fixed and unshaken'. From this perspective, the restoration of temporal peace, at least in the form of Roman re-occupation, was an irrelevance.

Conclusion

Sophronius's emphasis on moral renewal realised through the liturgical structures of the orthodox Church was far more than a platitude of his episcopal rank. It was instead one element in a far broader reaction to the crisis of empire, and one that characterised the output of the patriarch's entire circle (as well as those in similar situations outside it).[102] I have argued elsewhere that the hagiographic opus of Sophronius's mentor John Moschus, the *Spiritual Meadow*, should be seen as an attempt to articulate, in a context of exile and crisis, a grand vision of a socially inclusive, pan-Mediterranean community united in the sacramental system of the Chalcedonian hierarchy.[103] Indeed, while Moschus (in Rome) was perfecting the *Meadow*, Sophronius's pupil Maximus (in North Africa) wrote his *Mystagogy*, an interpretation of the eucharistic rituals that synthesised the sacramental cosmology of Ps.-Dionysius with the ascetic anthropology of Evagrius Ponticus.[104] Like Sophronius, Maximus therein insisted on the unrivalled spiritual gifts conferred through the eucharist and exhorted all Christians to participate regularly in its celebration. He presented the eucharistic rituals as a vast cosmic drama that realised (if imperfectly and temporarily) the anthropological, ecclesial, and cosmological union to be bestowed at the Judgement. Those same rituals, furthermore, were seen to recapitulate the life of Christ on earth; to mirror the supratemporal worship of

102. See recent work on the anti-Chalcedonian reaction to exclusion from the political process, esp. V. L. Menze, 'Priest, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in Sixth Century Syria', *Huyoge* 7/2 (2004); V. L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford, 2008), esp. 145–93.

103. See P. Booth, *John Moschus, Sophronius Sophista and Maximus Confessor between East and West* (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 2008), chap. 3.

104. See Maximus Confessor, *Mystagogy*, ed. C. Boudignon, *Maximi Confessoris Mystagogia*, CCSG 69 (Turnhout, 2011).

the angels; and to anticipate the final, mystical ascent towards God. Like Sophronius's sermons, therefore, Maximus's *Mystagogy* located the effective past not in the ephemeral triumphs of the Christian Roman empire, but in the inevitable progression of God's chosen people from creation through revelation to redemption, a progression re-created and guaranteed in the eucharistic rites of the orthodox Church. Thus, just as Christian contemporaries at Constantinople reacted to the loss of Palestine by proclaiming the imperial capital a new Jerusalem, Sophronius and his monastic colleagues reacted to the loss of empire by dismissing its significance as an effective medium of salvation, and locating the continued truth of the faith in the undiminished power of its sacraments.[105]

In the Palestinian circle associated with Sophronius, however, this ideological reorientation around the rites of the Chalcedonian Church was more than a simple reaction to the fate of empire, for it served as an inseparable complement to their emergent opposition to the monenergist and monothelete doctrines espoused at Constantinople. In the literature that purports to record Maximus's eventual trial for treason before the senate at Constantinople, Maximus is confronted with two relevant charges: first, that he had encouraged the sedition of the *strategos* of Numidia 'since God did not approve that the Roman state be aided during the reign of Heraclius and his family';[106] and second, that he had denied that the emperor was a priest (and thus able to interfere in matters of the faith). To the latter charge, Maximus replied, "No, he is not, because he does not stand beside the altar and, after the consecration of the bread, elevate it with the words, 'Holy things for the holy', nor does he baptise nor perform the rite of anointing, nor does he ordain and make bishops and presbyters and deacons; nor does he anoint churches; nor does he wear the symbols of the priesthood, the pallium, and the Gospel book'.[107] The *Record of the Trial*, which is the product of a close disciple of Maximus, cannot be read as its title implies—it is above all a hagiographic piece and has more in common with the *Apology* of Plato than a modern legal transcript. Nevertheless, the charges and the responses contained therein provide a vivid confirmation that Maximus's opposition to

105. For Constantinople as the new Jerusalem, see esp. Theodore Syncellus, *On the Siege of Constantinople*, ed. L. Sternbach, *Analecta Avarica* (Krakow, 1900), repr. F. Makk, *Traduction et commentaire de l'homélie écrite probablement par Théodore le Syncelle sur le siège de Constantinople en 626* (Szeged, 1975), with the study of Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 72–9.

106. See *Record of the Trial* 1, ed. P. Allen and B. Neil, *Scripta Saeculi VII Vitam Maximi Confessoris Illustrantia* (Turnhout, 1999), 13–51, at 15, repr. *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford, 2002), 48–74, at 50. For hints of this same view in Maximus's own corpus, see Sahas, 'The Demonizing Force'. For the connection between imperial monotheletism and temporal disaster, see also Anastasius of Sinai, *Against the Monotheletes* 1 [Uthemann 6of.].

107. *Record of the Trial* 4 [Allen and Neil, *Scripta* 27, *Documents* 56]. For discussion of the texts relating to Maximus's later trial and its context, see the magisterial treatment of W. Brandes, '"Juristische" Krisenbewältigung im 7. Jahrhundert? Die Prozesse gegen Martin I. und Maximos Homologetes', *Fontes Minores* 10 (1998), 141–212.

monenergism/monotheletism transcended the doctrinal (though not, of course, excluding it); that he regarded the crisis of empire as a manifestation of the emperor's heretical doctrine; and that the same opposition to the emperor was complemented in the elevation of the Church as the sole mediator of salvation, as the single terrestrial summation of past, present, and future. For Maximus and his Palestinian colleagues, the effective tradition was no longer that of Constantine and his successors; it was that of the orthodox Chalcedonian Church. Christian thought, which had once consumed the Roman empire, was now made to disgorge it. For some, at least, the faith had come full circle.

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Identity, Philosophy, and the Problem of Armenian History in the Sixth Century

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One of the most fascinating yet vexing aspects of medieval Armenian history is the frequency with which the historical record all but disappears for crucial periods, re-emerging in barest outline only in narrative histories written in light of later events, when all nuance is seemingly lost. The gap in sixth-century Armenian history, from roughly 484 to 591, is an excellent example of this phenomenon. The importance of this period for the formation of a distinctly Armenian Christian identity can scarcely be understated.[1] At its beginning in 484, the Armenians, then part of the Sassanid empire of Persia, had successfully resisted a re-conversion to Zoroastrianism that the Persian shah had attempted to impose. At its end, in 591, they were only just emerging from a fierce struggle for autonomy against the Nestorian Christians of Persia, when most of their territory was ceded to Byzantium; the parameters of the political debate were suddenly and drastically changed. Byzantine rule would provoke an equally fierce resistance to the encroachments of the patriarch of Constantinople, leading to a very well documented official breach in communion between the churches around 608. Yet the events of the intervening century remain largely a mystery.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a framework in which scholars might move beyond the polemical accounts of the seventh century, written in the aftermath of the breach with Byzantium, and understand something of how the Armenians might have seen themselves before relations with Constantinople had definitively soured. We will review the historical narrative as it stands and survey the historiography from which this narrative is taken; if we are to move beyond the received narrative, however, we must ask ourselves what other evidence remains. Three notable strands emerge from an inventory of written sources: philosophical texts, theological texts, and the curious case of the history of the Armenian uprising of 451 written by Ełišē (Eghishē).

1. For a recent survey of work on the formation of Armenian identity, see T. M. van Lint, 'The Formation of the Armenian Identity in the First Millennium', *Church History and Religious Culture* 89/1–3 (2009), 251–78.

The Sixth Century and Its Missing History

As the council of Chalcedon was convoked in 451, the Armenian nobility, Christian since the early fourth century, were fighting for their autonomy and their faith against the re-imposition of Zoroastrianism ordered by the Persian shah. Their defeat at the battle of Avarayr that year and the death of their leader Vardan Mamikonean were to become a centrepiece of Armenian consciousness, marking their willingness to fight and die for Christianity. It also precluded the attendance at Chalcedon of any bishop from Persian-ruled Armenia. This absence was to gain significance during the sixth century, as Roman emperors and successive church leaders struggled to find an elusive church unity. The Armenians secured their religious autonomy within the Persian empire a generation after the defeat at Avarayr, under the leadership of Vardan's nephew Vahan Mamikonean, in 484. The Armenian histories covering this period are accordingly written from the perspective of a land within the Persian empire, and have little to say about Armenian relations with the Roman world.

In 591, much of heretofore-Persian Armenia was ceded to the Roman emperor Maurice in return for the assistance he rendered Khusraw II, the young shah, in claiming his throne. Maurice seems to have attempted to assert imperial control over the Armenian church, and the bulk of evidence of discord within the Armenian ecclesiastical establishment dates to this period.[2] Around 608, during a civil war in the Roman empire and an attendant war between Rome and Persia, the Armenian church formally broke from communion with the Georgian church and renounced the council of Chalcedon (and thereby Byzantine orthodoxy) in the process.[3] Despite subsequent attempts during the seventh century to re-establish communion with Constantinople, by the end of the seventh century both Roman and Persian imperial power had been pushed out of Armenia altogether with the rise of Islam, and the Armenian church was left to steer its own doctrinal course.[4]

Thus, by 700 the entire historical landscape had changed. The old political order of Armenia had been overthrown, and the role of the church of Constantinople as their traditional confessional protectors within that old political order was no longer relevant. There remained a significant minority of Armenians who bitterly resented the schism and declared loyalty to the Byzantine church and the Council of Chalcedon. This minority did matter. A sense of what it meant to be Armenian is clearly

2. N. Garsoïan, 'L'église arménienne aux V^{e}-VI^{e} siècles: Problèmes et hypothèses', in N. Garsoian and J.-P. Mahé (eds.), *Des Parthes au Califat: Quatre leçons sur la formation de l'identité arménienne* (Paris, 1997), 39–57, esp. 52–4.

3. For an exhaustive study of the events leading to the split, see N. Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient* (Louvain, 1999). For a discussion of Maurice's attempts to assert imperial control over the Armenian church and its consequences, see 264–82.

4. Van Lint, 'Armenian Identity', 275–6.

evident in the contemporary literature, and it is heavily bound up with their confessional identity.[5] Those Armenian writers whose texts survive generally considered their people to be the oldest Christian polity in the world, ever faithful to the original Nicene faith as transmitted by St. Gregory the Illuminator,[6] and fierce defenders of that faith and their autonomy in its practice.[7] The history of Ełišē, who covered the 451 uprising, presented them in precisely this way, as willing to fight and die for their beliefs much like the Maccabeean Israelites.[8] It was only natural that both sides of the religious dispute claimed this heritage for themselves, and it is self-evident that its origins should be traced in the years between the council of Chalcedon and its formal rejection. By and large, however, the actual events of that period were simply not recorded. What are we to make of this gap, and how are we to proceed?

Extant Sources and the Difficulties They Present

Although we speak of a historiographical gap, we do not draw a complete blank for sixth-century Armenian history, so it is worth surveying what information we have. The period from 451 to 484 is covered in the history of Łazar P'arpec'i (Ghazar P'arpets'i),[9] who recorded the battle of Avarayr, the subjugation of the Armenian nobility after the defeat, and the restoration of their autonomy a generation later. Passing over Ełišē for the moment, the next general history is that attributed to Sebēos[10], written in the latter half of the seventh century and covering the final great war between Rome and Persia, the rise of Islam, and the collapse of the Persian empire. For the missing century, the Armenians appear in several external sources of the period—the *Wars* of Procopius[11], the *Ecclesiastical*

5. J.-P. Mahé, 'Confession religieuse et identité nationale dans l'église arménienne du VII^e^ au XI^e^ siècle', in Garsoïan and Mahé (eds.), *Des Parthes au Califat*, 59–78; for Armenian identity expressed through historiography in particular, see J.-P. Mahé, 'Entre Moïse et Mahomet: Refléxions sur l'historiographie arménienne', *Revue des études arméniennes* 23 (1992), 121–53.

6. Nearly all the Armenian sources for ecclesiastical history refer to the 'true faith' as imparted by St. Gregory; there are too many references to list here, but they include the vast majority of the letters from this period in the *Book of Letters* and the introduction to the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*.

7. N. Garsoïan, 'Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church (Fourth-Seventh Centuries)', in C. Mango and O. Pritsak (ed.), *Essays Presented to Ihor Sevčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday* (Cambridge MA, 1984), 220–50, has a discussion of the power exerted by Byzantine and Persian rulers over the Armenian episcopate.

8. R. Thomson, 'Ełišē's *History of Vardan*: New Light from Old Sources', in T. J. Samuelian (ed.), *Classical Armenian Culture: Influences and Creativity* (Atlanta, 1982), 41–51.

9. Łazar P'arpec'i, *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i*, trans. R. W. Thomson (Atlanta, 1991). References to primary sources cited in this article will be made to translated editions, for accessibility.

10. Sebēos et al., *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1999).

11. Procopius, *Wars*, ed. H. B. Dewing (London and Cambridge MA, 2000).

History of John of Ephesus[12], and others—as key players in the wars between the Roman and Persian empires and as peripheral players in the Christological controversies that occupied those years. Even much later, in 'universal' histories such as those of T'ovma Arcruni and Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i that appeared in the early tenth century, the sixth century is passed over more or less in silence.

Three Armenian sources of the seventh century include either extremely limited or patently polemical coverage of the sixth. The history attributed to Sebēos has its apparent beginning in the middle of that century but contains only short notices, up to the death of the Sassanian shah Khusraw I in 579, whereupon the author focuses exclusively on personalities and events at the Persian court until the reign of Maurice and establishment of Khusraw II on the throne in 591. The *Anonymous Chronicle* sometimes attributed to Anania of Širak, dating from the late seventh century, includes an ecclesiastical history down to the seventh century that, although unambiguously Miaphysite in its coverage, says very little specifically about Armenia or the Armenian church until roughly the reign of Heraclius.[13]

The most detailed source that remains, the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, is also an ecclesiastical history. It survives only in Greek translation from the original Armenian and a fragmentary Georgian translation from the Greek.[14] Written from a pro-Chalcedonian Armenian point of view, it corresponds closely to the anti-Chalcedonian writings of the seventh century, including the *Anonymous Chronicle*. It is, in a sense, the 'other side of the story' of Armenian ecclesiastical history; the 'story' here is, however, the one that was debated in the seventh century rather than the one experienced in the sixth. The *Narratio* is crucially important, in that it preserves evidence of an alternate version of Armenian identity, providing counter-evidence for the pervasive later view that an adherent to the Chalcedonian church could not be a 'true' Armenian.[15] Unfortunately for our purposes, and for all its value as an ecclesiastical source, the *Narratio* focuses almost exclusively on disputes and events within the church. It provides no sense of secular political history during this time.

12. John of Ephesus, trans. R. Payne Smith, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John, Bishop of Ephesus* (Oxford, 1860).

13. For a discussion of this chronicle, see T. W. Greenwood, 'New Light from the East', *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 16/2 (2008), 197–254, esp. 237–48, for the sixth century.

14. G. Garitte, *La Narratio de rebus Armeniae* (Louvain, 1952). For a summary of the manuscript transmission history, see the introduction, 15–19.

15. For more on the question of Armenian Chalcedonians, see V. A. Arutjunova-Fidanjan, 'The Ethno-Confessional Self-awareness of Armenian Chalcedonians', *Revue des études arméniennes* 21 (1988–9), 345–63. The author delineates the struggle within the Armenian church between Chalcedonians and Miaphysites and observes that, by the eleventh or twelfth century, the use of the term 'Armenian' had begun to be restricted to adherents of the anti-Chalcedonian Armenian church.

There are some contemporaneous references to Armenia from non-Armenian historians. Procopius gives many scattered pieces of information concerning the participation of various Armenians in Justinian's wars:[16] the brothers Nerseh (Narses) and Hrahat (Aratius) Kamsarakan, who fought first against Belisarius and Sittas before defecting to the Romans; the power struggles over 'certain villages in [Roman] Armenia' between the Armenian lords Symeon and his nephew Hamazasp (Amazaspes) and the imperial agent Acacius; and the Armenian involvement in the treaty negotiations of 543, when Khusraw sought peace with the Romans in the midst of the rebellion of his son and an outbreak of the plague. His account portrays individual princes as deciding their loyalties for themselves and switching their allegiances from time to time.

John of Ephesus gives a more substantial account of Armenian affairs in the 570s,[17] but he is writing an anti-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical history, whose major theme is the activities of Miaphysites throughout the Christian East and their persecution by the Chalcedonian authorities. In particular, John gives an elaborated account of an event mentioned briefly by both Sebēos[18] and the *Narratio:*[19] the revolt of Vardan Mamikonean in 571, his murder of the Persian *marzbān* Surēn, and his flight, together with the catholicos (Armen. *kat'ołikos*) Yovhannēs, to the court of Justin II in Constantinople. John describes the subsequent Byzantine campaign in support of Vardan and the separatist Armenians, the renewal of the war that led to the Persian capture of Dara, the illness of Justin II, and the failed peace negotiations between Tiberius and Khusraw.

Menander Protector also writes at length about negotiations between the Byzantine and Persian rulers over the Caucasus, specifically over Lazica.[20] Yet it is particularly interesting to note that the religious polemics that pervade the account of John of Ephesus are barely detectable in the history of Menander; this disparity of emphasis should be borne in mind when considering the question of the sixth-century Armenians.

16. Procopius, *Wars*; I.xii:20–4, I.xv:31–2 for the defection of the brothers Narses and Aratius; II.iii for the power struggles in Roman Armenia; II.xvi:2 for an Armenian serving in the court of Constantinople; II.xxiv for Armenian intervention in the treaty negotiations between Khusraw and the Roman envoys at Dvin.

17. John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 2:18-9, trans. 118–26.

18. Sebēos et al., *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 6–9. The historian implies that the rebellion of 571 was precipitated, not by the building of a fire-temple or an attempt to impose Zoroastrian religious observance, but by the secession of Siwnik' from the Armenian territory within Persia.

19. Garitte, *Narratio*, §77–84 (37–8), French trans. J.-P. Mahé, 'La Narratio de rebus Armeniae: Traduction française', *Revue des études arméniennes* 25 (1994–5), 429–38.

20. R. C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool, 1985).

Religious Disputes and the Armenian Participants

Turning from the historiography, the most significant contemporaneous written source available to scholars of Armenian history is the *Book of Letters* (*Girk' t'łt'oc' [t'ght'ots']*).[21] This is a compilation of ecclesiastical letters attributed primarily to the catholicoi of the Armenian church, first made some time after the 608 schism. Its primary purpose was to preserve the correspondence of the Armenian church leaders with the other notable ecclesiastical figures of the day. It contains only a few letters from the century before 591; two of these, significant for our purposes, were written by the catholicos Yovhannēs II Gabełean (Gabeghean, 557–74), and both anathematise Chalcedonians.[22] These references to 'Chalcedonian heretics' are, at best, oddly out of place here; at worst, it is anachronistic,[23] and in light of later events the scholar must consider the possibility that this constitutes evidence of a later revision of the text. John of Ephesus reports that, when Yovhannēs accompanied the rebel Vardan Mamikonean on his flight to the emperor's court in 571, he and the Armenian princes, 'through inattention', accepted communion with the Chalcedonian church of Constantinople.[24] Yovhannēs was to die in exile in the Roman empire within three years; his acceptance of communion must therefore have been after he had written the letters quoted in the *Book of Letters*. It is hardly credible that the catholicos would make such an 'inattentive' error at this point; it is far more likely that the question of Chalcedonian Christianity was not yet central enough in Armenian theological debate to preclude all doctrinal flexibility.

The references to Nestorianism, on the other hand, are significant. Nina Garsoïan, in the most comprehensive study to date of the history of the Armenian and Georgian churches from the fourth century to the seventh, has recently made the case that the Armenian church was indeed concerned with a Nestorian influence in the mid-sixth century, coming not from the Roman world but from Khuzistan.[25] She argues that the references to 'Chalcedonian' heretics in Yovhannēs' letters should be taken merely as evidence that the Council of Chalcedon was linked to support for Nestorius and was condemned on that basis rather than on the grounds of true Chalcedonian theology.[26]

21. Armenian text: *Girk' t'łt'oc'* (Jerusalem, 1994). A selection of the letters is included, in French translation, in the appendices to Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*. For a philological overview of the extant editions, see A. Schmidt, 'Das armenische "Buch der Briefe": Seine Bedeutung als quellenkundliche Sammlung für die christologischen Streitigkeiten in Armenian im 6./7. Jh.', in H. C. Brennecke et al., *Logos: Festschrift für Luise Abramowski zum 8. Juli 1993* (Berlin, 1993), 511–33.

22. *Girk' t'łt'oc'*, letter 44, pp. 207, and 209, and letter 45, pp. 211 and 213. Translations in Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, 484–90.

23. Garsoïan, *L'eglise arménienne*, 248.

24. John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 2:19, trans. 126.

25. Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, chap. 3, esp. 207–39.

26. For a discussion of these letters, see Garsoïan, *L'eglise arménienne*, 248ff.

The letters within the *Book of Letters* that date to the time of the 608 schism still draw a distinction between Chalcedonianism and 'Nestorianism', though the Chalcedonians were by then referred to as 'murderers of God', 'companions in heresy' to Nestorius who were 'expelled from the church'.[27] The distinction between these doctrines blurred over time, until, by the tenth century, the label 'Nestorian' was applied directly to Chalcedonian beliefs.[28] This is a conflation similar to that which Garsoïan proposes for the letters of Yovhannēs, but this sudden appearance of a tenth-century conflation in a sixth-century source must raise the eyebrows of a modern reader.

The documentation concerning the Second Council of Dvin in 554/5, in contrast to the transmitted text of these letters of Yovhannēs, makes no mention of the Council of Chalcedon in its attacks on Nestorian theology.[29] The general tenor of the letters in the *Book of Letters*, especially those exchanged by the heads of the Armenian and Georgian churches leading up to the schism,[30] is strikingly polemical; the argumentative subtlety that one might expect from an earnest discussion is nowhere to be found here, replaced instead with rhetorical signals that neither side is willing to budge and does not seriously expect the other to. There is no hint of the attempts at accommodation and compromise that were certainly happening around 550 and after. The flight of the Armenian rebels to Constantinople in 571 is, in itself, strong evidence that the Armenian religious and political leadership was open to the possibilities of accommodation with the Roman church and imperium. By the time the *Book of Letters* was compiled, the situation called for a picture of an intransigent Armenian church, unwilling to allow itself to be swayed from the tenets of its faith. Indeed, this is the impression in which the Armenians would later take pride, in keeping with the image of themselves as defenders of their Gregorian faith. This is the attitude (though not necessarily the text) to which the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae* is a reaction. The *Narratio* also claims that Chalcedonianism was rejected at the Second Council of Dvin, in 554/5[31]—the facts on both sides of the debate had already been altered in the seventh century.

Philosophy in Armenia during the Sixth Century

The second contemporaeous echo of sixth-century Armenia is the evidence of a major increase in philosophical activity during that century. This evidence comes in two forms. The first is a collection of philosophical texts attributed to

27. *Girk' t'łt'oc'*, letter 55, 251–2. Translation in Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, 525.
28. Garsoïan, *Grand schisme,* 403.
29. Ibid., 402.
30. These letters, whose ordering within the *Book of Letters* presents some difficulties, are given in translation by Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, 516–83.
31. Garitte, *Narratio*, §69–70, 36 (Mahé, *Narratio: Traduction française*, 433–4).

'David the Invincible', one of the few works of Armenian literature dating from this century. David was a philosopher of uncertain identity.[32] He was probably active in Alexandria, as a student of Olympiodorus; he may or may not have been Armenian, but his commentaries and lecture notes appeared in Armenian and seem to have had a wide reception.[33]

David's texts themselves may be included in the second form of evidence: the sheer volume of texts, both philosophical and patristic, translated from Greek during this time. This translation activity, which took place throughout the sixth century but particularly in the second half, points to a keen interest in philosophy among Armenians and a high level of engagement with Greek literature and culture.[34] Abraham Terian proposes four successive 'waves' of translation activity, three of which took place in the sixth century.[35] The first wave included the rhetorical handbook of Dionysius Thrax and texts authored by and attributed to Philo; these latter were to figure heavily in the composition of Ełišē, as we will see below. Other philosophical texts, including those of Aristotle and Porphyry, were translated in a second wave, probably sometime in the 570s; in this model, David's own texts belong to the third wave, alongside, inter alia, the works of Plato, probably translated near the end of the century.

Given the scale of interest in philosophical and religious thought and particularly in the work of Greek authors, the simplistic and polemical tone of the religious arguments as preserved in the *Book of Letters* and the *Narratio* becomes difficult to justify as an accurate representation of the sixth-century terms of debate. As Daniel King argues for the Syrian context, in another paper in this volume, it is not enough to accept the suggestion of Peter Brown that theologians sought training in classical philosophy (and particularly in the works of Aristotle) in order to better argue theological points.[36] That there was theological debate during this period and that the leading intellectuals of Armenia engaged in this debate is indisputable, but the arguments as they are preserved in the historical record betray little or no influence of Aristotelian reasoning or careful argument.

32. David, *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy*, trans. B. Kendall and R. W. Thomson (Chico CA, 1983).

33. See V. Calzolari and J. Barnes, *L'oeuvre de David l'Invincible et la transmission de la pensée grecque dans la tradition arménienne et syriaque* (Leiden, 2009) for a recent collection of papers on David and his work.

34. For more on the 'Hellenising school' of early medieval Armenian translation activity, see Robert W. Thomson, 'The Reception of Greek Literature in Armenia', in J. T. A. Koumoulides (ed.), *Greek Connections: Essays on Culture and Diplomacy* (Notre Dame IN, 1987); C. Mercier, 'L'école hellénistique dans la littérature arménienne', *Revue des études arméniennes* 1 (1978/9), 59–75; A. Terian, 'The Hellenizing School. Its Time, Place, and Scope of Activities Reconsidered', in N. Garsoïan, T. F. Mathews, and R. W. Thomson (eds.), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington DC, 1982).

35. Terian, 'The Hellenizing School', 175–6.

36. P. R. L. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200–1000* (Oxford, 1996), 173.

The circumstantial picture that begins to emerge instead is that of an Armenian political and intellectual elite, substantially connected to the church—although the extent of that overlap cannot be judged with full confidence—who were engaged with the Greek and Syrian intellectual worlds, as well as the Persian world of which they were formally a part. The records of the first and second councils of Dvin[37] and several letters in the *Book of Letters* before the second council[38] and published elsewhere[39] dating from the 570s show that Miaphysite Syrian theologians (most notably the bishop ʿAbdishoʿ, the author of three of the preserved letters) were also engaged with the Armenians, not least in the conflict between the Armenian church and the Church of the East. It is therefore not difficult to imagine an intellectual engagement with the Syrian world that reached beyond the realm of the strictly theological, and the parallel developments in philosophical literature that appear in the Syrian and Armenian context seem to support this.

There is also ample evidence of engagement with the Greek intellectual and East Roman political world. The volume of text that was translated from the Greek around this time, as well as the political involvement of Constantinople in Armenian affairs, demonstrate this clearly. By the end of the seventh century, however, only the faintest traces of the discussions of the sixth century remain in those sources in which we might have hoped for a more nuanced view; the tenor of the *Book of Letters*, of the history attributed to Sebēos, and of other works compiled in the seventh century such as the *Book of Canon Law* (*Kanonagirkʿ*)[40] portrays an Armenia that can survive only as long as its people defend themselves, both physically and morally, from those outsiders who seek to subjugate them.

A Sixth-century History? The Case of Ełišē

The third strand of evidence that provides a circumstantial picture of sixth-century Armenia can be found in the history of Ełišē. To place Ełišē in the sixth century is itself to contradict the Armenian received tradition. His subject is the Armenian revolt of 451, which was also covered by Łazar Pʿarpecʿi. Ełišē claims to have been an eyewitness to the events, and his version of the revolt, with its emphasis on the covenant between God and the Armenian people, is the one that predominates in Armenian history. Like David the Invincible Philosopher,

37. Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, 438–56 and 474–83.

38. *Girkʿ tʿłtʿocʿ*, letters 35–40 (172–95), trans. Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, 457–73.

39. K. Ter-Mkrtčʿean, ʿErusałemi [Erusaghemi] Yovhannēs episkoposi tʿułtʿ", *Ararat* (1896), 52–6, 214–5. French translation in Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, 490–501.

40. A. Mardirossian, *Le livre des canons arméniens (Kanonagirkʿ Hayocʿ [Hayotsʿ]) de Yovhannēs Awjnecʿi: Église, droit et société en Arménie du IVe au VIIIe siècle* (Louvain, 2004).

later Armenian historiography places Ełišē in the middle of the fifth century. They were both named as members of the circle of students of Maštoc' (Mashtots'), who was the inventor of the Armenian alphabet and, in that sense, the father of Armenian literature. This fictitious association lent both writers the prestige that justified the wide influence of their works.

Notwithstanding this tradition and the claim of Ełišē in his own text, there is considerable evidence that he belongs somewhere in the second half of the sixth century.[41] It has been argued that his *History* is an elaboration of that of Łazar, which would have appeared near the end of the fifth century; it has also been noted that his text was influenced by the work of Philo and that he used a Hellenising style of translation that is normally reckoned as part of the flurry of translation activity mentioned above.[42] Even if the later date is accepted, it is impossible to date his history more precisely. Known as *The History of Vardan and the Armenian War* (*Patmut'iwn Vardanay ew Paterazmay Hayoc' [Hayots']*), Ełišē's history is a re-telling of the revolt of Vardan Mamikonean, of whom the Vardan Mamikonean who rebelled in 571 was a descendant and namesake. Ełišē has adapted the tale of the revolt so that its events resonate with the theme of the Books of Maccabees—the story of another embattled people who fought to defend their religion from the impiety of their foreign kings and the collaborationist treachery of their fellows. In the earlier history, probably written shortly after 485, Łazar focused very strongly on the theme of martyrdom in battle, on the personal heroism of Vardan Mamikonean, on the treachery of Vasak of Siwnik' (Syunik) that arose from his conflict of interests, and on the perfidy of Vasak's son-in-law Varazvałan, who becomes the catalyst of the entire affair (and, oddly enough, suffers no adverse consequences of his apostasy and malice.) Ełišē has removed some of this moral ambiguity: he has written Varazvałan entirely out of the history, and Vasak becomes a collaborationist villain whose only motives are Satanic influence and desire for earthly power. Ełišē's is an epic tale, and a moral tale, and it is plain from a re-examination of the history of John of Ephesus that the tale resonated strongly in the 570s.

Two themes near the beginning of Ełišē's history stand out; these are the conspiracy of the Persian religious leaders to eradicate Christianity by enforcing a single creed (Zoroastrianism) throughout the empire, and the loyalty of Armenians to the shah, notwithstanding their Christianity:

> The magi said: 'Valiant king, the gods have given you your empire and success. They have no need of human honour; but if you convert to one

41. Ełišē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, trans. R. W. Thomson (Cambridge MA, 1982), introduction, 18–29.

42. Indeed, the respective datings of the translation of Philo and the history of Ełišē have often been used to support or attack arguments for each other. See Terian, 'The Hellenizing School', 177–8, and Thomson, *History of Vardan*, introduction, 22.

> religion all the nations and races in your empire, then the land of the Greeks will also obediently submit to your rule.[43]
>
> . . . Then in unison the magi and astrologers raised their voices and together said: 'The gods who gave you empire and victory over your enemies have no need to seek visible honours from you, but [they wish] that you remove all the erroneous teachings of men and bring them to the single honourable Zoroastrian religion'.[44]
>
> But because they were obedient to the holy testaments of God, they continually recalled the commands of Paul: 'Servants, be obedient to your bodily masters; be not false servants and deceitful, but serve [them] faithfully as if [serving] God and not men. For the recompense of your just labours comes from the Lord'.[45]
>
> . . . But the soldiers in unison, with noble minds, bravely and forcefully cried out together saying: 'Heaven and earth are witnesses to us that we were never tardy in the king's service, nor did we ever mingle cowardice with our noble valour'.[46]
>
> . . . 'From our ancestors we have retained the divinely-instituted custom of praying for the life of the king and ceaselessly requesting God for long life for him, so that he may rule in peace his universal empire, which has been entrusted to him by God, and so that in its extended peace we too may complete our lives in well-being and piety'.[47]

These precise themes appear in John's account of the arrival of the Armenian rebels in Constantinople in 571. He includes a précis of recent history, as allegedly told by the fugitive Armenians, that bears a striking resemblance to the events of 451, as narrated by Ełišē:

> They [the Persian mages] therefore assembled together, and begged an audience with Khosrun their king, and said, 'O king, live for ever! Behold we have learnt that the Roman Caesar requires, and forces, and compelleth all persons within his realm to conform themselves to his faith, and obliges many throughout all his dominions to worship according to his religion. And all those who will not submit, he drives away, and persecutes from all his realm. Let your godship therefore in like manner command, that so it shall also be throughout your realm: that all religions shall conform to your religion, and all persons in your dominions worship according to your worship; and that such as insolently dare to resist

43. Ibid. 63.
44. Ibid. 72.
45. Ibid. 65.
46. Ibid. 73.
47. Ibid. 83, letter from Joseph, bishop of Ayrarat, and the other Armenian bishops.

> your commandment shall no longer live'. And when Khosrun the king heard these words of the Magians, he consented, and accepted their counsel: and immediately he began with the Christians first, and sent and seized three bishops and many of the clergy, and commanded them to deny their faith, and worship with him fire and the sun and the other objects of his reverence.
>
> But they argued with him, and manfully resisted, and confessed, saying; 'We are of Christian sentiments, and worship and honour the God Who made the heavens and the earth and the seas, and all that therein is: and we cannot leave Him Who is the Creator of all to worship His creatures. Let not the king mistake: for over our bodies you have power to do with them whatsoever you desire: but our souls are His, and in His hands, and over them you have absolutely no power at all'.[48]

This explanation of the revolt, rooted in the alleged anti-Christian attitude of Khusraw I, does not fit well with other accounts of Khusraw. He was generally regarded as tolerant of the Christians within his realm[49] and interested in the theological and philosophical disputation that characterised the era. The history attributed to Sebēos goes even further, claiming that Khusraw converted to Christianity on his deathbed.[50] Although the tale of Khusraw's conversion to Christianity is almost certainly apocryphal, it is difficult to imagine that a Persian shah who had tried to impose Zoroastrianism in Armenia in the 570s would receive such favourable treatment in a history written a century later. Indeed, Sebēos' brief account of the revolt of 571 makes no reference to religious persecution or to any attempt to re-impose Zoroastrianism on Armenia.

The similarity of the tale preserved by John of Ephesus to Ełišē's story of the 451 revolt, along with the lack of any direct reference to 451 in John's account, suggest that the reader (and perhaps the court of Constantinople) was indeed given a version of events that belonged more properly to the fifth century. The connections between this passage in John's history, the approximate date of authorship of the history of Ełišē, and the appearance of another Vardan Mamikonean leading another rebellion against Persian rule can only be speculated upon. In keeping with the anti-Chalcedonian polemical nature of his own history, John has turned the episode into an accusation against imperial attempts to impose church unity: he claims that the roots of the Persian persecution of Armenia lay in the actions of the Roman emperor (at that time, Justin II, r. 565–78) against his own subjects.

48. John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 2:18, trans. 118–20.

49. A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1944), 441–3; Khusraw had a reputation in the Oriental sources for tolerance of Christianity, and his son and successor, Hormizd, followed the policies of his father, although 'with less prudence and moderation'.

50. *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 9–10.

It is much more difficult to place Ełišē's history in its proper context and to make any judgement of his motivations in writing. The details of the revolt of 571 are obscured by the contradictions and lacunae in the available sources. Was the history written for the benefit of the second Vardan Mamikonean, to renew the glory of his martyred ancestor? Did the tale of the fifth-century Vardan inspire the sixth-century Vardan to lead another revolt? Or was Ełišē's history perhaps written after the 571 revolt, to draw a comparison between the two Vardans?

Whatever the circumstances of its authorship, the history of Ełišē appears to have emerged at a crucial time for the development of the Armenian church and thus of Armenian ecclesiastical and cultural identity. The account of the Armenian profession of earthly loyalty to the Persian shah and spiritual commitment to their ancestral brand of Christianity, given by both Ełišē and John of Ephesus, can be seen in itself as a profession of Armenian identity. It may be significant that it is this history of Ełišē, rather than the more contemporaneous account of Łazar, that became such a dominant and integral part of the Armenian historical tradition in later centuries. It may also be significant that this first appearance of the influence of Ełišē in the historical record, in the 570s, is roughly contemporaneous with the first traces of the elaboration of a distinctly Armenian dogmatic position in the last quarter of the sixth century.[51]

Provisional Conclusion

The history of the Armenians in the sixth century remains murky, and, in the absence of contemporary accounts of the era, it will never be fully elucidated. The vast majority of the history to date has been written with reference to the material on the ecclesiastical disputes of the late sixth and early seventh centuries, simply because this is almost the only documentation that survives. This focus has had a profound effect upon our understanding of Armenian history and the shaping of Armenian identity, but taken on its own, it can easily distort the sixth-century realities. There are several avenues of approach to the problem that have not yet been explored to their full potential, which centre on the use of written sources of the period that are not strictly historiographical. This indirect evidence can shed additional light on the era and help correct the distortion. Already, the non-theological texts of David the Invincible Philosopher, the large volumes of material translated from the Greek, and the literary history of Ełišē that almost certainly dates from this period can be studied for the clues they might yield concerning the context in which they were written. Although much research remains to be done, we hope that this paper will serve as a starting point for further investigations into the Armenian sixth century and the ways in which the Armenians were interconnected and engaged with the wider Near East during this period.

51. Garsoïan, *Grand schisme*, 403.

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The Chronicle of Seert *and Roman Ecclesiastical History in the Sasanian World*

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The *Chronicle of Seert* is a dense, composite chronicle that covers the periods c.251–423 and c.483–650. The chronological breaks in the text are purely accidental: the *Chronicle* was reconstructed from two manuscripts found, in Mosul and Seert, by Addai Scher around 1902. The text itself was probably composed in Iraq in the tenth century and, while it is written in Arabic, it relies heavily on earlier Syriac sources, most of which are no longer extant.

At the core of the *Chronicle* lies the succession and deeds of the catholicoi, the bishops of the Sasanian capital of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Judging by the internal evidence of the text, some of this episcopal history seems to have been written in the fifth century, but the historians of later generations would add episodes on Roman emperors, Persian shahs, fathers of the church, and famous heretics, as well as describing the deeds of the catholicoi of their own days.

Though much of the early sections of the *Chronicle* is highly abbreviated or disjointed, the material for 590–640 presents rounded protagonists and links the fates of several different institutions and groups. These compositions, I suggest, represent the original work of ecclesiastical historians who also re-ordered and expanded much of the earlier material.[1] This impression, of a flowering of history-writing at the end of the sixth century, is confirmed by the thirteenth-century *Catalogue* of ʿAbdishoʿ of Nisibis, which lists all the scholars of the Church of the East known to him. He lists some fifteen historians, whose work has not survived, who wrote in the period after c. 590.[2]

1. This introduction summarises the conclusions of my post-doctoral research on the *Chronicle of Seert*.

2. ʿAbdishoʿ, *Metrical Catalogue*. Note especially the comments of J. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana in qua manuscriptos . . . comparatos*, 3 vols. (Vatican, 1719–28), IIIa:168, 171. See also the list in J. Fiey, *Jalons pour un histoire de l'église en Iraq* (Louvain, 1970), 9. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 4, XVII:273 and XVIII:277–80, on Constantine and Nicaea, provide good examples of the variety of earlier historical accounts from which the chronicle's compiler was able to draw.

I would like to focus here on the elaboration of the history of the fourth and fifth centuries by historians in the sixth and seventh. It is in this material that we clearly see the juxtaposition of new forms of history with a tradition of history-writing that had hitherto been regional and confined to the Sasanian world. With the addition of these new currents of history, we can trace an important aspect of the changing self-conception of Christians in the Sasanian world at the end of the seventh century, when the consequences of older Christological debates in the Roman world became known and relevant further east. Elsewhere in this volume, Omar and Talib point to the use of Christian histories by Muslim societies to produce a distinctive contemporary identity: here we see a similar process at work, where Christians in the Sasanian world deployed Western histories to define orthodox belief more closely or appropriate the prestige of the Western fathers of the church.

This version of Roman ecclesiastical history represents a distinctive combination of the fourth- and fifth-century Greek sources that provides a chain of orthodoxy for the fathers of the Dyophysite Christology of the Church of the East, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Nestorius. The following sections will analyse the reception of this 'official' church history in the Sasanian and post-Sasanian world and investigate how and why Roman ecclesiastical history was epitomised and adapted. I begin by examining the Roman ecclesiastical history in Marī's *Chronicle* (composed c.1140) and the *Chronicle of Seert* to determine the original point of composition of this Western material and the context for the embedding of this material in the 'patriarchal histories' centred on Ctesiphon. After this, I contrast this process to the use of Western history in the Nisibene ecclesiastical history of Barhadbeshaba, with its more explicit focus on the theology and person of Nestorius.

The Dyophysite Fathers and the Fifth-century Histories

The *Chronicle of Seert* draws its early narrative of Roman ecclesiastical history from Eusebius,[3] Socrates Scholasticus, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.[4] The Greek ecclesiastical histories have been mined to provide discrete biographies of fathers of the church, holy men and heresiarchs: of Peter of Alexandria, Arius,

3. Eusebius was important to the Iraqi ecclesiastical historians for his role in determining the date of Easter (*Chronicle of Seert*, PO 4, XXI–XXII:285–7). His *Chronicon* was accessed chiefly through the translation of Simeon of Beth Garmai (c.600): Assemani, *BO*, IIIa:633. On the continuations of Eusebius's *Chronicon* in the Syriac tradition, see H. Kesseling, 'Die Syrische Eusebius Chronik', *Oriens Christianus* (1927), 31–47 and 225–39 and (1928), 33–53; W. Witakowski, 'The Chronicle of Eusebius', *ARAM* 12 (2000), 419–37, and R. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart, 1999), esp. 121 for his comments on the *Chronicle of Seert*.

4. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 4, X:247, cites Socrates and Theodore of Mopsuestia directly.

Ephrem, Paphnutius, Flavian and Diodore, Basil, Macedonius, and Theodore of Mopsuestia (many of them 'Antiochene', Dyophysite theologians). The level of detail given these hagiographic vignettes points to the continued theological relevance of these post-Nicene theologians and the deliberate assertion of a Dyophysite chain of inheritance.[5] The *Chronicle's* celebration of the orthodox theologians of the past proclaimed the contemporary orthodoxy of the Church of the East.

While the *Chronicle*'s list of Western fathers clearly continued into the middle of the fifth century, the break in the middle of the *Chronicle* obscures exactly how this chain of 'orthodoxy' might have continued into the controversies surrounding the fall of Nestorius at Ephesus (431), which saw the contest between Theodoret and other Dyophysites with Cyril of Alexandria, and the Council of Chalcedon (451), which witnessed the fall of Cyril's successor Dioscurus. Another medieval Arabic compilation, the twelfth century *Chronicle* of Marī ibn Sulaymān, provides an important point of comparison to the *Chronicle of Seert*. It shares many of the narratives about the theologians of this era, often more heavily abbreviated, and his history can provide us with an impression of how the missing part of the *Chronicle of Seert* treated the fall of Nestorius.

Roman ecclesiastical history in Marī exists in a single narrative, which extends from the fourth century to the middle of the fifth. It focuses on the defeat of the Arians, as narrated in Socrates or Theodoret, and its aftermath in the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Like the *Chronicle of Seert*, much of this narrative focuses on individual theologians, and the material taken from Socrates and Theodoret was summarised with an eye to these deeds of important individuals and to the heretical opponents of the 'orthodox'.

Marī's *Chronicle* continues the anti-Arian history of his sources into the time of Nestorius. Marī describes the alliance of the Roman Pope Celestine with Cyril and Cyril's attack on the memory of John Chrysostom, before narrating the failed attempt of John of Antioch to exile Cyril and defend Nestorius.

Marī then provides further vignettes, each with a different focus, that present Chalcedon as a vindication of Nestorius and his opposition to Cyril. These vignettes ignore the fact that Chalcedon actually confirmed Nestorius's deposition at Ephesus. Marī reports how Marcian (r. 450–7) commanded the monks who had supported Cyril to abandon their position. Next, he describes the opposition of Dioscurus, Cyril's successor, and the extreme Monophysite

5. With a few exceptions, only post-Nicene authors were translated into Syriac. S. Brock, 'Syriac Literature: A Crossroads of Cultures', *Parole de l'Orient* 31 (2006), 17–35, at 22.

Eutychius to Flavian of Constantinople, 'a disciple of Theodore'. Here he complains how Flavian was expelled to die in exile before Dioscurus and Eutychius were themselves condemned.[6]

Marī presents the Dyophysite fathers in a chain of orthodox succession, leading from Diodore to Theodore, followed by their successors Nestorius and Flavian, and completes this narrative arc with his description of Chalcedon as a vindication of the Dyophysites. It is clear that he has received his account of Nestorius from a Greek ecclesiastical history that, while violently opposed to Cyril, also had a positive vision of Chalcedon and represented Flavian as a prominent Dyophysite martyr. Nestorius is viewed sympathetically and prominently, but his fall is not the culmination of this narrative. The whole narrative of Nestorius and Flavian is of the same style, with brief invented quotations by Cyril to justify his actions, and it is knitted together by the depiction of the Cyrilians' fight with the Dyophysites, from Chrysostom to Flavian.

The sixth-century ecclesiastical historian Evagrius refers to a little known history of Nestorius that he used for this period, and it may be this, or something like it, that has entered the 'Iraqi' tradition.[7] Given the emphasis on Chalcedon in Marī's account, it may have come from within a Dyophysite Chalcedonian tradition, originally composed in Greek.[8]

This section of Marī's *Chronicle* is instructive for what it tell us about how the Roman ecclesiastical history found in the medieval compilations reached Iraq and the purposed it served. The aftermath of Chalcedon produced various attempts to orchestrate the quotations of a patristic past that all sides revered in favour of a theological position and the theologians who espoused it. These took the form of relatively detailed stories, such as those used by Marī, and lists of select fathers. The latter included those who were directly implicated in the formation of Christology (such as Diodore and Theodore), but it also resulted in the inclusion of several other figures who were co-opted because of their opposition to heretics (of the fourth century or earlier) who were seen as precursors of the Miaphysites.

We can see several examples of the retrojection of the debate between Cyril and his Antiochene opponents in the *Chronicle of Seert*. Diodore is identified as an opponent of Photinus and Paul of Samosata, both of whom were traditionally

6. Marī, ed. and trans. H. Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae: De patriarchis nestorianorum commentaria I: Amri et Salibae textus* (Rome, 1896), 32–5/ 37–40.

7. Evagrius, *HE*, I:7.

8. On the enduring support for Theodore of Mopsuestia and a strongly Dyophysite Christology in some Chalcedonian circles see A. Outler, 'The Three Chapters: A Comment on the Survival of Antiochene Christology', in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus* (Chicago, 1977), 357–64. For example of a historian writing in this tradition in the early sixth century see R. Janin s.v. Basile de Cilice, *DHGE*.

employed as polemical comparisons in later Christological debates.[9] And Epiphanius of Salamis, the heresiographer, may be included, accompanied by a long hagiography with no *theological* content at all, because he was identified as an opponent of Apollinarius, who was often represented as the inspiration for the Miaphysitism of Cyril and Severus.[10] Similarly, lists of 'fathers of the church' may include figures from the far West, such as Damasus of Rome and Ambrose of Milan, because they had opposed the Apollinarians and were subsequently employed in florilegia that were collated to oppose the Miaphysites.[11]

Isho'yahb I (582–96) and the Incorporation of Roman Ecclesiastical History

The stories of 'the fathers' seen in the medieval compilations have their origins in debates in the Roman world in the late fifth century. But how were these lists of orthodox 'fathers' and the heresies they opposed transmitted into Church of the East?

The testimony of the synods of Ctesiphon provides the crucial theological background to this reception of history. In these synods there is a clear sense of the importance of the fourth-century councils of the Roman Empire, Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381). These councils are referred to as bases for the orthodoxy of the Church of the East: later doctrinal canons are seen to flow from their rulings.[12] But specific debates about Christology are not informed by the technical language that had been developed at Chalcedon and before. Even though the catholicos Aba (540–52) had been responsible for bringing Nestorius's theological tract, the *Bazaar of Heracleides*, from the West in 540, Aba's council discusses Christ's nature only by directly quoting Biblical passages. Until the middle of the sixth century, theology in the Church of the East reflected in the synods, including attacks on Theopaschism, used traditional, local theological terminology.[13]

However, the last quarter of the sixth century witnesses major developments in the self-definition of the theology of the Church of the East, as

9. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 5, XLIX:276.

10. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 5, LXIV:314–5. On Apollinarius and his legacy see P. Gray, 'The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and Their Significance', in M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005), 215–36, at 218–9.

11. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 5, LVII:305.

12. E.g., the preamble to Joseph's synod in 555, *Synodicon orientale*, ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1092), 97.

13. S. P. Brock, 'The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth Century to the Early Seventh Century: Preliminary Considerations and Materials', in G. Dragas (ed.), *Aksum Thyateira. A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britian* (London, 1985), 126–32.

articulated at Ctesiphon. This was the definition of orthodoxy against a series of heretical opponents and an increasing concern with the technical language of creeds.

The definition of orthodox doctrine becomes much more explicit in Ishoʿyahb I's synod of 585. Here the preamble lays a particular stress on the need 'to define the true faith', and, for the first time, issues of creed and the reputation of theologians are debated in the canons themselves. In particular, his first canon provides an exegesis of the creed declared at Constantinople at 381 and emphasises the condemnation of the Macedonian heresy, the opponents of Theodore of Mopsuestia, in that council.[14] This is followed, in the second canon, by a brief account of Theodore's life, which describes his birthplace, his intellectual succession, and his association with John Chrysostom. Ishoʿyahb concentrates on the figure of Theodore, confirming his role as the exegete par excellence.[15]

In a synodical letter appended to the acts of the 585 council, Ishoʿyahb continues to refine his definition of orthodoxy. He explains the creed in terms of the avoidance of a series of heresies: the Marcionites, followed by Paulicians, Photinians, Eutychians, and Apollinarians.[16]

The Apollinarians and Marcionites had already been identified in the 576 synod of Ezekiel, but the addition of other (more obscure) heresies is interesting because they correspond to the accusations made by Nestorius himself in the *Bazaar of Heracleides* and by Pope Leo of Rome and other Chalcedonians against Dioscurus. The heresiology of Ishoʿyahb's synod therefore suggests awareness of newly available older sources from the West, which were used to create a more sophisticated criticism of contemporary Miaphysitism.

Some twenty years before Ishoʿyahb, the Miaphysites had made substantial inroads into Iraq, with the missions of Aḥūdemmeh, who converted the Arabs of the Jazira and prominent members of the court of Khusraw I. The self-definition of Ishoʿyahb's synod through this complex heresiology implies a more sophisticated and international vision of ecclesiastical history, whereby the Church of the East could use heresiologies developed in the debates of the middle fifth-century Roman world to attack contemporary Miaphysites. Ishoʿyahb's emphasis on the primacy of Theodore of Mopsuestia was also an attempt to prevent internal changes to the church's Christology within the School of Nisibis by Henana, whose teachings were represented as dangerous innovations.[17]

14. *Synodicon orientale*, 133–6.

15. *Synodicon orientale*, 137–9.

16. *Synodicon orientale*, 193–5. He also contrasts the doctrines of Severus with the orthodoxy of Ephrem.

17. Fiey, *Jalons*, 127, notes phases of Miaphysite expansion in the 520s, 536–42, and the 550s, in response to Roman persecution in Syria. John of Ephesus presents 'Persia' as a major Miaphysite refuge. Ishoʿyahb himself was a product of the School of Nisibis and its sometime governor. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 7, XXXVI:194 and PO 13, XLII:438.

The synods of the late sixth century represent Miaphysitism as the continuation of earlier Roman heresy. This interest in the heresiological classification of Miaphysites through their supposed forebears also suggests an approximate dating for the inclusion of the Dyophysite ecclesiastical history into the Iraqi historical repertoire. This historical material, like the heresiology of Ishoʿyahb's synod, set out the Roman history of the orthodoxy of the Church of the East. This reception of Western history may have been made possible by the prominence of the school of Nisibis, as point of contact for Western ideas and a centre of education for the East, as well as the personal diplomatic contact between the catholicos and the Roman emperor. In addition, the awareness of this new, theologically significant history coincides with the first ecclesiastical historians mentioned by ʿAbdishoʿ: the availability of a Western historical tradition may have stimulated the flowering of historiography in this period.

Nisibis and the Dyophysite History of Barhadbeshaba

The histories of the Dyophysite fathers in the medieval compilations should be viewed in the context of another account of the same events composed in Nisibis, the Syriac *Ecclesiastical History* of Barhadbeshaba (c.569). This text was produced in the later sixth century as part of the attempt to link the founding theologians of the School of Nisibis, via the school of the Persians in Edessa, to the intellectual tradition of Diodore, Theodore, and Nestorius. Like Marī and the *Chronicle of Seert*, Barhadbeshaba begins his history with Arius and proceeds to a description of Nicaea; the neo-Arians of the fourth century (Aetius and Eunomius) and their 'orthodox' opponents (Basil, Flavian, Diodore, John Chrysostom, Theodore, and Nestorius). This text illustrates the importance of Nisibis as a gateway for the heresiological and historical ideas developed under Ishoʿyahb's patronage, as well as Barhadbeshaba's focus on Nestorius as a martyr.[18]

Barhadbeshaba's narrative focuses on the anti-Arian positions of the orthodox, probably influenced by the position of the fifth-century histories of Theodoret and Socrates. Even his descriptions of later figures such as Theodore and Nestorius emphasises their credentials as opponents of paganism and Arianism.[19] Like the account preserved in Marī, Barhadbeshaba may have used the history of Nestorius referred to by the sixth-century Greek Chalcedonian historian Evagrius to compose the last part of this history,[20] but he combined this with

18. On the School of Nisibis, see A. H. Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, 2006).

19. Barhadbeshaba, *HE*, XIX:506–9 and XX:521.

20. Evagrius, *HE*, I:7. The sections on Theodore and Nestorius are written in a style to similar to that of Socrates and Theodoret, with lengthy quotations from letters and speeches.

the information contained in the theological work attributed to Nestorius himself, the *Bazaar of Herclaides*, as well as a *Life of Nestorius*. The density of material devoted to Nestorius makes it clear that he was the centre of this narrative of Dyophysitism in the Roman Empire and that, for Barhadbeshaba, he provided a crucial link to the School of Nisibis and to the theologians Narsai and Abraham.[21]

Barhadbeshaba uses Roman ecclesiastical history to present the chain of orthodox teaching in which Nestorius was educated and which he preserved in his writings before his deposition and condemnation by Cyril of Alexandria. The arguments between theologians of the Antiochene school and Cyril had culminated in the latter's campaign against the works of Diodore and Theodore, his condemnation of Nestorius at the 431 council of Ephesus, and the exile of Nestorius to Egypt.[22]

Barhadbeshaba emphasises both Nestorius's intellectual ancestry ('an Antiochene', 'a co-citizen of Theodore') and his status as a martyr ('a spiritual athlete'). His account of Nestorius's duel with Cyril focuses on his theology, drawing on the *Bazaar of Heraclaides* itself. The *Bazaar* influences the structure of the *History* as a whole: both texts emphasise the orthodox ancestry of Nestorius and of the sees of Antioch and Constantinople, and this may underlie the *History*'s account of the fourth century, with its bias towards Antiochene theologians.[23] The *Ecclesiastical History* also follows the *Bazaar* in typifying Nestorius's opponents as 'the Egyptians' and in its presentation of Nestorius's own theology, which emphasises Mary's role as 'Mother of Christ' rather than 'Mother of God' or 'Mother of a man', in the style of older 'heresies'. Barhadbeshaba argues for the orthodoxy of Nestorius's position and presents Cyril's 'Mother of God' formula as heretical—either Manichaean or Apollinarian.[24]

We are not concerned here with the accuracy of the claims of the *Bazaar* or of Barhadbeshaba that they represent Nestorius's theology, or with the accuracy of that theology. Both authors present attempts to assert Nestorius's position within orthodoxy.[25] But there is no condemnation of the faith of the Roman world in

21. Unlike most other biographies in the history, Nestorius receives two sections, and these are long, with a total of about 70 pages in Nau's edition. Sudden jumps in the narrative suggest that Barhadbeshaba is mixing two or more different texts (e.g., XXI:528–9).

22. Among various modern summaries of these events is H.-I. Marrou (ed.), *Nouvelle histoire de l'église* (Paris, 1963), 1:384–94.

23. *Bazaar of Heracleides*, trans. G. Driver and L. Hodgson (Oxford, 1925), 377, gives a list of orthodox bishops.

24. Barhadbeshaba, *HE*, XX:530–2. *Bazaar*, 96–8, also calls Cyril an Apollinarian and a Theopaschite (93).

25. See M. Anastos, 'Nestorius Was Orthodox', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962), 119–40, at 139: 'the insistence that human experiences should be in a strict sense attributed to Jesus Christ . . . was not only an idiosyncracy of Nestorius'. The *Bazaar* (311) emphasises above all that the two *ousiai* (substances) of divine nature could not be mixed: 'I separate the two natures but unite the adoration'. See also R. Chestnut, 'The Two Prosopa in Nestorius' *Bazaar of Heracleides*', *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978), 392–409.

either text, only a vicious polemic against the Egyptians. The argument is instead for the mistaken condemnation of Nestorius by those who had realised the falsehood of a truly Monophysite position, such as that of Eutyches.

Neither the *Bazaar* nor the history of Barhadbeshaba, composed over a century later, has abandoned the Roman world as the unredeemable site of heresy. Strikingly, Barhadbeshaba even presents Marcian, the convener of Chalcedon, as inviting Nestorius to return to Constantinople after the death of Cyril, though Nestorius refuses and lives out his days as an ascetic in Egypt.[26]

The Miaphysite historian Zachariah of Mytilene had accused Marcian of being a follower of Nestorius and Theodore in his orchestration of Chalcedon.[27] Barhadbeshaba's *History* and the history that was ultimately inserted in Marī's *Chronicle* seem to have inverted this view, by adopting both Marcian and Nestorius as opponents of Cyril and defenders of Nestorius and the Theodoran tradition, but there is an important difference between the two eastern histories: Barhadbeshaba is focused primarily on Nestorius, as a martyr and as a theologian, while the history used by Marī treats him more simply as an opponent of Cyril. The difference is partly a reflection of the Nisibene author's richer sources and greater interest in theology, but it also raises the broader question of how much emphasis authors in the Church of the East were willing to place on Chalcedon, and how far they were aware of the condemnation of Nestorius at Chalcedon or considered it important.

Chalcedon in the Church of the East

The transmission of a positive account of Chalcedon to the Church of the East occurred under unusual political and theological circumstances. Ishoʿyahb I's prestigious diplomatic contacts with Maurice and their mutual declarations of orthodoxy took place at a time when the Roman emperor was acting decisively against Miaphysites in the east.[28] Maurice targeted Miaphysites leaders who used their religious differences with Chalcedon to assert a measure of political independence. Maurice dismantled longstanding relations with the Ghassanid Arabs and attempted to force the conversion of their leaders to Chalcedonianism, and he pursued a policy of rural missionary work, which was especially successful in the Caucasus.[29]

26. Barhadbeshaba, *HE*, XXX:585–6.

27. Zachariah of Mytilene, *HE* III:4.

28. Marī, trans. Gismondi, 57, describes Ishoʿyahb I taking communion with Maurice, but this may confuse the similar meeting between Ishoʿyahb II and Heraclius.

29. R. W. Thomson, 'The Armenians in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries', in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History XIV: Late Antiquity and Successors, A.D. 425–600* (Cambridge, 2001), 662–77, at 674–6; Evagrius, *HE*, VI:22, ed. Bidez and Parmentier, 238.

Maurice's religious policies may have made Ishoʿyahb's courting of the emperor a more obvious policy under this emperor than his predecessors, because Maurice, unlike Justinian or Justin II (r. 565–78), never made concessions to the Miaphysites and applied consistent pressure to prominent Miaphysite centres on the frontier. History-writing in the Church of the East became proliferated in the generation after Ishoʿyahb's death, during the reign of Khusraw II, and these histories, preserved in the dense final part of the extant *Chronicle of Seert*, remember Maurice as the pious supporter of the catholicos Sabrishoʿ, the defender of Khusraw during his civil wars and as a Christian martyr, killed by the usurper Phocas (r. 602–10).[30]

Some authors in the Church of the East continued the pro-Chalcedonian sentiments of the reign of Ishoʿyahb I, especially those writing 'history' rather than 'theology'. The *Chronicle of Seert* includes several sections that continue Roman ecclesiastical history into the sixth century. Some of these focus on events in early sixth-century Constantinople and juxtapose the actions of the patriarchs of that city, such as Anatolius and Gennadius, with those of contemporary catholicoi and Roman popes as enemies of the 'Theopaschites'.[31]

This narrative of sixth-century events probably provided a continuation of earlier sections that described Chalcedon. Notably, the same *effect* is produced by the fifth-century scene in Marī and these sixth-century scenes: Roman and Constantinopolitan patriarchs, and Chalcedonian emperors, are ranged against the Miaphysites and support the Dyophysite fathers, and the negative vision of Nestorius at Chalcedon is explained away.

However, not all commentators within the Church of the East maintained such a positive view of Chalcedon. The next section examines the opposition to Chalcedon as part of a wider defence of Nestorius, an idea that had its origins in the School of Nisibis in the sixth century but achieved prominence in the reigns of Babai and Ishoʿyahb II at the start of the seventh.

The anti-Chalcedon tradition

Ishoʿyahb I's harmonious relationship with Maurice was not matched by the relationship between other theologians of his church and Roman emperors. During the reigns of Justinian and Heraclius (610–41), the emperors attempted to engage in dialogue with the Church of the East while offering the Miaphysites concessions—either through Justinian's condemnation of the Three Chapters in 553 (in which Theodore of Mopsuestia was denounced) or in Heraclius's doctrine of monotheletism, which sought to produce a new compromise formula. Moreover, Guillaumont has observed that the

30. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, LXVIII:497 and LXX:499.
31. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 7, III:104–5, VI:108, XI:123, XIX:138, XXII:145.

opposition of the scholars of Nisibis to Justinian provided a historical precedent that was invoked against Ishoʿyahb II (r. 628–45), who took communion with Heraclius.[32] In other words, an historical discourse in the course of the late sixth century evolved that asserted the theological boundaries of the Church of the East, in contrast to the more tolerant alternative presented under Ishoʿyahb I.

The account of the meeting of Justinian (r. 527–65) with the theologians is preserved in the *Chronicle of Seert*, though its chronology is disordered.[33] It begins by observing Justinian's decline into Julianism, a Miaphysite splinter group. Next, it describes how the emperor received a delegation of theologians led by Paul of Nisibis, who also included the future catholicos Ishoʿyahb I. These theologians then convince Justinian of the legitimacy of the Dyophysite position, but Justinian later anathematises Diodore and his companions, after which he dies.

This embassy occurred in 562,[34] shortly before the emperor's death, but the author has displaced the Three Chapters controversy to maintain the illusion that Paul successfully convinced Justinian and that the emperor later broke faith with him. The meeting with Justinian prompted Paul to write his lost *Treaty against Caesar*, whose content is discussed in a ninth-century Miaphysite polemic.[35] This text accuses Paul 'the Nestorian' of arguing for two hypostases and argues that this would render God as a Quaternity and not a Trinity. If these accusations are true, it would present Paul as a more extreme Dyophysite than Ishoʿyahb I.

The records of the synods convened by the catholicoi show knowledge only of Justinian's Three Chapters in the 585 synod, with its defence of Theodore of Mopsuestia, which is repeated in 596. The delay in Ctesiphon's reaction to Justinian's actions confirms the thesis that Ishoʿyahb I's reign saw a new international awareness in circles around the catholicos, but Ishoʿyahb I, unlike Paul, made no explicitly Christological statement to buttress his defence of Theodore.[36] Ctesiphon appears both more isolated and less theologically developed in this period than Nisibis.

Sebastian Brock has noted that it is only under Babai, in the 610s, that the Church of the East adopted an extreme Dyophysite Christology, with its assertion

32. A. Guillaumont, 'Justinien et l'église Perse', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23 (1970), 39–67.

33. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 7, XXXII:186–8. This section on Justinian includes material from multiple sources, and, like the 'Constantinople' material, this diversity may show later collection of disparate sources under the heading of Justinian's reign.

34. Scher (note 187) mistakenly dates this to 533: Guillaumont, 'Justinien', 51.

35. Assemani, BO, IIIa:88.

36. Paul was defeated in a political struggle with Ishoʿyahb's predecessor Ezekiel (*Chronicle of Seert*, PO 7, XXXVI:193–4), and his highly defined Christological position may have seemed threatening to catholicoi inclined towards international compromise.

of two *qnume* (hypostases) in the Son.[37] However, as Guillaumont observes, this may reflect trends in the theology of the Church of the East that go back to Paul of Nisibis.[38] Babai may also draw on Paul's ideas in other ways: he supplemented his Christology with an image of Justinian as a new Saul, 'a murderer of the priests of God', who 'composed heretical books against the orthodox'.[39]

Babai composed his work at a critical time for the Church of the East, when Miaphysites had gained influence at court and forced their opponents, labelled for the first time 'Nestorians', to justify publicly their orthodoxy before the shah in 612. Like earlier synods of the church, Babai's theology was defined by its stance against Theopaschism, but this was now combined with a greater interest in technical Christology (in the hypostastic union) and in the vocabulary and slogans of Nestorius himself (such as 'Mother of Christ').[40] Babai articulated a much more extreme Dyophysitism than had previously been employed in the synods, and this period of Dyophysite reaction may underlie the opposition to Ishoʿyahb II in 630, when he accepted communion with Heraclius at Aleppo after the Romans defeated the Persians and when the emperor seemed on the verge of settling differences between Christian groups.[41]

The controversy that surrounded Ishoʿyahb II's mission receives a lengthy description in the *Chronicle of Seert*, in a long letter written against the catholicos by one Barsauma of Susa that has been inserted into the text.[42] Barsauma begins by praising the catholicos and praying that the church may always be protected from heresy, but he soon launches into criticism of Ishoʿyahb: 'I cry with a loud voice: there is a deep chasm between us and the Greeks that has its origin at the Council of Chalcedon, which robbed men of equality, took away justice, forced the fathers to renounce their opinions . . . and excited persecution'. He follows this with a further six objections to Chalcedon and to Ishoʿyahb's behaviour. The council, he says, praised Cyril and Celestine, ratified the synod of Ephesus and exiled Nestorius. It also proclaimed that two natures could exist in a single hypostasis, and called Mary 'Mother of God', instead of 'Mother of Christ'. Finally, and most importantly, by saying mass with a Chalcedonian, Ishoʿyahb had agreed to avoid saying the names of the Dyophysite fathers in the diptychs and therefore abandoned the faith declared at Nicaea and Constantinople ('the faith of the 318 and 150').

37. Brock, 'Christology of the Church of the East'; G. Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great* (Kottayam, 1982), 87–8.

38. Guillaumont, 'Justinien', 61.

39. Babai, *Liber unione*, ed. and trans. A. Vaschalde (Louvain, 1915), 66.

40. Chediath, *Christology of Mar Babai*, 62–76.

41. Heraclius's patriarch Sergius was represented as 'a follower of Theodore' who apostasised by proposing his Monothelete formula. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, LXXXII:528.

42. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, XCIV:562–78.

Barsauma criticises Chalcedon at a level of detail not seen before in the Eastern sources. The contrast between the information shown here and the positive vision of Chalcedon in Ishoʿyahb I's historians is a product of a more extreme theological stance in the East after Babai's 'reign' and ever increasing knowledge about the content of the Western councils. Barsauma's criticisms follow Babai's agenda in highlighting the importance of the hypostatic union and the title of Mary. In Barhadbeshaba, Nestorius had been seen as a martyr for a Dyophysite orthodoxy, but the condemnation of Nestorius that was confirmed at Chalcedon was never explored, because of ignorance of the council's contents and because it was represented as a defeat for the followers of Cyril, such as the Alexandrian patriarch Dioscurus. Greater knowledge of the acts of the Greek church, increased Miaphysite pressure within the empire, and the changing policies of the Roman emperors meant that these contradictions were increasingly revealed.

Barsauma goes on to present Ishoʿyahb's actions in terms of the behaviour of his predecessors, by comparing his compromise to their steadfastness and showing the significance of his deeds for the success of the heretics of the past. Barsauma compares Ishoʿyahb to Paul of Nisibis, who stood up to Justinian 'though inferior to you in honour and rank',[43] and recalls Aḥai (d. 414) and Acacius (d. 496), other catholicoi who went to the Romans as diplomats but maintained the honour of the church.[44] He chastises Ishoʿyahb for 'receiving Ceasar's gold and the patronage of [the Persian queen] Boran [r. 630–1]'. He calls to mind the last judgement to remind him that 'now is a time when empires are being overturned: it is not an occasion when men can gather up treasure for themselves'.[45] As the dupe of the emperor, Ishoʿyahb has allowed the heretical beliefs of Cyril and Apollinarius, who have cast their shadows over the West, 'to encroach upon the lands of the East'.[46]

The historian of these events seems to have inserted Barsauma's letter verbatim and does not explicitly deny Barsauma's vision of the faith. The description of Ishoʿyahb's meeting with Heraclius corresponds fairly closely with Barsauma's image of orthodoxy: Heraclius is impressed by the catholicos's intelligence, and they discuss Paul of Nisibis's works against Justinian and agree that they are consistent with the faith of Nicaea. Heraclius also allows Ishoʿyahb to suppress the name of Cyril from the diptychs and hears Ishoʿyahb's defence of Mary's title as 'Mother of Christ'.[47] Similarly, Ishoʿyahb defends himself from Barsauma's accusation by emphasising that he wanted to make peace with the

43. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, XCIV:568.
44. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, XCIV:573.
45. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, XCIV:575.
46. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, XCIV:567.
47. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, XCIII:557–61.

emperor and that he had always confessed Christ 'in two natures and two *qnume*', which 'stifled the flames of Barsauma's anger'.[48]

Though we cannot know what the private agreements were between Heraclius and Ishoʿyahb II, the catholicos's discussion of Christology in a letter suggests that he saw Chalcedon as misguided but not as the kind of aberration that the Miaphysites represented. He describes Chalcedon as 'neither orthodox nor heretical': 'it was intended to restore the faith, but slipped away [from its intention] due to feeble phraseology . . . It can never be said that two hypostases existed within a single nature'.[49] This attitude may have allowed Ishoʿyahb to accept communion with Heraclius and only raise certain issues that he considered important, leaving aside the names that Heraclius's bishops might employ in the diptychs or the rehabilitation of Nestorius. His letter seems to avoid the controversial issue of the names of the diptychs. He only cites one 'father', Gregory of Nyssa, and only one council, Nicaea.[50] Similarly, his condemnation of heretics only includes those who were anathematised in all Christian churches.[51]

The concentration of Christological debate on individual reputations had previously been raised as a problematic issue in the Roman world, in the early sixth century. In his informal conversations with the Miaphysites, Justinian had protested that 'they say nothing unorthodox but do not want to communicate with us because of scruples [because of] names in the diptychs'.[52] Like Justinian, Ishoʿyahb may have seen the possibility of the reconciliation of Christological views that respected the language and traditions of the Church of the East without raising the issue of differences in the diptychs. But, as we have seen, these names (and parallel lists of heretics) had been an important feature of the self-definition of the church against the Miaphysites.

Ishoʿyahb II employed the sophisticated terminology of Paul and Babai, but also had to act as emissary to an emperor who had just defeated the Persian empire in a twenty-year war. There must have been a great incentive to reach a compromise with an emperor in a dominant political position, whose victory may have also implied the beginning of the last days, especially when Sasanian rulers were being regularly deposed and were no longer offering regular patronage. Yet, at the same time, the importance of the person of Nestorius for the self-representation on the Church of the East, which we see in Barhadbeshaba, ultimately revealed the internal contradictions of a canon of orthodoxy

48. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, XCIV:576–9.

49. *Christological Letter of Ishoʿyahb II*, ed. and trans. R. Sako, *Lettre christologie du patriarche syro-orientale Ishoʿyahb de Gdala (628–42)* (Rome, 1983), 146–7.

50. Ibid., 152 and 160–1.

51. Ibid., 145–6.

52. S. Brock, 'Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox in 532', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 47 (1981), 87–121, at 109, section 35.

that tried to include both Chalcedon and Nestorius. The course of events has been edited to limit the effect of Barsauma's objections. Bar Hebraeus, a Miaphysite writing in the thirteenth century—who had less incentive to cover up embarrassing details—presents the meeting as a loss of face for Ishoʿyahb. He reports that Ishoʿyahb followed 'the Greek faith' and was dropped from the diptychs until he made a public declaration that he had not denied his faith.[53]

Reflections on Chalcedon under the ʿAbbāsids

The long-term impact of Babai's assertion of a more extreme Christology and a more marked identification with Nestorius and his slogans is seen in the ninth- and tenth-century texts that are roughly contemporary with the *Chronicle of Seert*. The ninth-century liturgical and ecclesiological compilation attributed to George of Arbela gives a major role to Nestorius in several different contexts. Several discussions of theology are accompanied by their historical context, and, in a long text that refers to few individuals, Nestorius is mentioned as the great opponent of Cyril, as the target of the Theopaschite Trisagion, and, strikingly, as the source of the church's name as 'Nestorians'.[54] The fact that George employs the term 'Nestorian' positively shows the shift in attitudes that must have occurred, in some parts of the church at least, between the polemical use of the term in 612 and the church's own use of the term by the ninth century.

Around the same time as George, the liturgist Shahdost of Tirhan also employed a positive vision of Nestorius, this time embedded in a synchronised history of the Roman and Persian churches focused on theology and liturgy. Shahdost's work, preserved in a later florilegium, emphasises the 'Mother of Christ' slogan and focuses on Cyril's attack on Nestorius at Ephesus.[55] He calls himself one of the 'Nestorian Christians', in contrast to his Miaphysite opponents, and 'Nestorius' is a common attribution for anonymous texts in the same florilegium.[56]

The identification of the Church of the East with the person of Nestorius did not initially have an impact of the church's vision of Chalcedon, but the growing popularity of Nestorius in the work of Babai and beyond and the increased definition of the church's Christology made the contradictions more acute. Ps.-Isḥaq of Nineveh, preserved in the same florilegium as Shahdost, presents Chalcedon as a moment of apostasy by the one-time opponents of

53. Bar Hebraeus, *HE*, III:96–126.

54. George of Arbela, *Expositio officiorum*, ed. and trans. R. Connolly, *Anonymi auctoris Expositio officiorum ecclesiae ad Georgio Arbelensi vulgo adscripta*, 4 vols., CSCO 64, 71, 72, 76 Scriptores Syri 25, 28, 29, 32 (Leuven, 1911), 1:107, 129–30, 187–8.

55. L. Abramowski and A. Goodman, *Nestorian Christological Texts* (Cambridge, 1972), 13 and 17.

56. Ibid., 31.

Cyril: 'while some took exile . . . others disregarded the fear of the heavenly king to avoid losing their position of leadership . . . and assented to a single *qnuma*'.[57] Shahdost, by contrast, was more prepared to defend Chalcedon. Well read in the historical tradition of the Church of the East, Shahdost may have known of an earlier positive vision of Chalcedon that he tried to blend with the church's contemporary focus on Nestorius.[58] He asserts that '[The catholicos] Acacius did not accept Chalcedon but did not entirely reject it either. . . . [I]t will not mislead us that the heretics and the followers of the synod dare to say that the synod anathematised Nestorius. We say to them "You lie, for the synod called him lacking in understanding and placed no anathema on him."'[59]

Shahdost attempts to maintain the positive vision of Chalcedon in the Church of the East by presenting a negative interpretation as a plot by the Miaphysites. In so doing, he may have been engaged in cross-confessional dialogue with Melkites (Chalcedonians) in Iraq and beyond. But Shahdost's attempts at compromise with the Chalcedonians are still mistaken in showing Acacius's synod of 486 as engaged with Chalcedon at all, when its only theological statement was a simple objection to Theopaschism.

Conclusions

Sebastian Brock has powerfully rebutted the idea that the Church of the East was Nestorian in a technical theological sense, and, in so far as 'Nestorian' was a label that exaggerated the church's Dyophysitism, he must be correct, especially when it is applied to the period before Babai's creation of a new Christological language.[60] The Acacian synod of 486 was anti-Theopaschite rather than Nestorian, and the praise for Nestorius by contemporary writers such as Mar Narsai of Nisibis was made without any real knowledge of his theology: Theodore was a much more important influence.

But the Church of the East was increasingly Nestorian in a historical sense, in that Nestorius played a critical role in the church's historical imagination. Initially, the reverence for Nestorius was accommodated in a wider history of the church fathers that had a positive image of the Council of Chalcedon. This version of events, popularised under Isho'yahb I, was preserved and elaborated

57. Ibid., 37.

58. At ibid., 18–19 and 23, he notes the Roman and Persian rulers at several points in his theological narrative, which implies he derives a portion of his information from histories as well as theological material.

59. Ibid., 20.

60. S. Brock, 'Nestorian Church: A Lamentable Misnomer', *BJRL* 78 (1996), 23–53 at 23–30, and S. Brock, 'The Church of the East up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from Councils in the Roman Empire', in *Syriac Dialogue: The First Non-official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syrian Tradition, with focus on the Theology of the Church of the East* (Vienna, 1996), 68–85.

in the church's historical tradition and embedded in the medieval compilations. This narrative, which represents the Chalcedonian churches of the West as Dyophysite allies of the Church of the East, is a prominent theme of the *Chronicle* of Marī and the *Chronicle of Seert*.

However, an alternative view also existed. From the middle sixth century, Eastern theologians such as Paul of Nisibis objected to the attempts of Roman emperors to compromise with the Miaphysites. This stance caused problems for a catholicos such as Ishoʿyahb II, who sought a rapprochement with the Romans. This theological difference was exacerbated by the focus on Nestorius's slogans by Babai, which would ultimately culminate in the self-identification of the church as 'Nestorian' in the ʿAbbāsid period. And this identification may have also represented a means of emphasising differences with other Christian groups, who increasingly overlapped geographically with members of the Church of the East. In its turn, this emphasis prompted the retrojection of the image of the church as Nestorian onto its earlier history and maintained the church's distinctiveness against both Miaphysites and Chalcedonians.

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Why Were the Syrians Interested in Greek Philosophy?

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In the first edition of his popular work, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, Peter Brown wrote, in reference to the Christological controversies conducted in Syriac, that

> Elementary logic, whose rules had been laid down by Aristotle, was essential for understanding the exact meaning of crucial passages in the scriptures. It was also necessary for religious controversy. It was a sternly impartial, 'technocratic' tool, wielded by an elite prepared to enter with zest into religious controversy with its many Christian and non-Christian rivals . . . the austerely neutral skills of logic and medicine provided the 'secular' knowledge necessary for controversy and exegesis.[1]

It is a view that is repeated throughout the modern study of the subject of Syriac philosophy and theology,[2] and is often presupposed in general overviews of the transmission of Greek philosophy and science en route to Baghdad. Syriac-speakers, it seems, took an interest in Aristotelian logic because they could deploy it in the service of their intense and often vitriolic debates over the single or dual natures of Christ.

What I shall suggest below is that there is little or no evidence to support this assertion. Augustine, although he 'gasped with suspense' upon opening the *Categories*, believed it to be (or at least asserted that the conscious employment of it was) an 'obstacle' to theology.[3] Many Eastern theologians, Greek and Syriac, felt the same. Although there was something of a shift in the sixth century, as the

1. P. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200–1000* (Oxford, 1997), 173. The second edition (2003) is more judicious.

2. Three examples at random: "the *Organon* forged weapons for their theological dialectics" (R. J. H. Gottheil, 'The Syriac Versions of the Categories of Aristotle', *Hebraica* 9 (1892–3), 166–215, at 166); it was "the foundation for theological reflection" and "applied systematically to . . . Biblical literature" (A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*, CSCO 266 [Leuven, 1965], 22:183); philosophers make the same assumption, M. Frede, 'Les Catégories d'Aristote et les pères de l'église grecs', in O. Bruun and L. Corti (eds.), *Les Catégories et leur histoire* (Paris, 2005), 135–73, at 162.

3. *Confessions* IV.xvi:28.

neo-Chalcedonian theologians sought to use Aristotle to harmonise Chalcedon with the Cyrilline tradition, this is less true further east, and the evidence we have pertaining to the question, 'why were Syriac-speakers interested in Aristotle?' points rather to a non-polemical, albeit still 'religious' environment. We are not concerned with the wider-ranging and difficult question of the extent to which Greek philosophical principles were perhaps responsible for the confusion over Christology in Late Antiquity; rather, we can attempt an answer to the more circumscribed question of why Syriac-speakers self-consciously adopted the study of Aristotelian logic into their version of what we might call higher education, and whether and why they ever integrated an understanding of Greek logic into the sorts of theological texts that attempted to solve the Christological conundrum.[4] In considering the problem from this angle, we shall thereby catch a glimpse into a variety of different ways in which Syriac-speakers sought to construct an identity for themselves.

Syriac Philosophers and Their Backgrounds

The only philosophers writing in Syriac from the pre-Islamic period known to us in any detail are Sergius of Reshaina, Probus of Antioch, and Paul the Persian. All three are dependent upon, and considered themselves as working within, the Alexandrian tradition of late Platonist work on Aristotelian logic. This fact wants stressing, for while the first two at least were churchmen in the broad sense, there is no indication that their philosophical studies were part of a wider confessional agenda for the furtherance of the Miaphysite church.

We know something of the life of Sergius, that he studied in Alexandria, that he was a much-respected physician who died in 536 while in Constantinople on a diplomatic mission on behalf of the Chalcedonian bishop of Antioch. His 'co-religionists' within the burgeoning Miaphysite hierarchy of the later sixth century considered him apostate from the orthodox (i.e., the Miaphysite) faith, although his fame outlasted Ps.-Zachariah's imputations of immorality.[5] While Sergius affirms that the whole purpose of studying logic and philosophy is to attain to theology, he does not mean by this Christological proofs so much as contemplative theology, the ascent of the individual soul towards a higher union with the godhead as conceived in the systems of Evagrius and Ps.-Dionysius, both authors he read and translated.[6] The rather less philosophically-oriented

4. We are restricting this investigation to logic as such, principally because it is logic that is often seen as the Greek philosophical contribution to the Christological debate.

5. Ps.-Zachariah, *Chronicle*, IX, chap. 19. See G. Greatrex (ed.), and R. R. Phenix and C. B. Horn (trans.), *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah: Church and War in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool, 2011).

6. J. W. Watt, 'From Sergius to Matta: Commentary and Translation in Syriac Aristotelian and Monastic Tradition', in J. W. Watt and J. Lössl (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (Aldershot, 2011), 239-58, explicates the true aims and motivations of Sergius' philosophical work.

works of his contemporary Philoxenus, with their strong Christological polemic, mark the difference between the two.[7]

Probus of Antioch, like Sergius, was a physician but never a bishop and his writings appear to be entirely philosophical. The long-held opinion that there was some close connection between his work and the translation of the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia at the School of Nisibis early in the fifth century has long been shown to be baseless, although it may underlie the Brownian dictum quoted at the beginning.[8] It is possible that our philosopher Probus is one and the same as the Probus who accompanied the Miaphysite Patriarch Peter of Callinicum to Alexandria late in the sixth century and then converted to Chalcedonianism under the influence of a certain Stephanus the Sophist, who may in turn be identified with the famous Alexandrian philosopher of that name.[9] If true, it would be worth noting that both Sergius and Probus were ex-Miaphysites (or only ever nominal ones). Probus was, in any case, hardly a heretic-hunter. As was the case with Sergius, his works are set firmly in the Platonist Alexandrian tradition and the form of his commentaries is closely modelled on those of Olympiodorus, possibly his teacher.[10]

Our third philosopher, Paul the Persian, makes the point even more clearly.[11] He keeps philosophy and faith epistemologically separate, arguing in a tradition of Persian scepticism that true knowledge is unobtainable (cf. Ibn al-Muqaffa')[12] while maintaining that the types of knowledge with which faith and science deal are different and not to be confused.[13] This is different indeed from Sergius' motivation for learning, but neither does Paul provide any closer

7. Note Sergius's conciliatory manner of Christianising those aspects of Aristotelian cosmology antithetical to his tradition, D. King, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On the Principles of the Universe* in a Syriac Adaptation', *Le Muséon* 123 (2010), 159–91.

8. S. P. Brock, 'From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning', in N. Garsoïan, T. Matthews, and R. Thomson (eds.), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington DC, 1982), 17–32, at 26, citing earlier literature. The old dating is still sometimes found.

9. S. P. Brock, 'The Commentator Probus: Problems of Date and Identity', in J. W. Watt and J. Lössl (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (2011), 195–206. If the Stephani are one and the same—as many have argued; for details see K.-H. Uthemann, 'Stephanos von Alexandrien und die Konversion des Jakobiten Probos, des späteren Metropoliten von Chalkedon', in C. Laga, J. A. Munitiz, and L. van Rompay (eds.), *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for His Seventieth Birthday* (Leuven, 1985), 381–99—then, in Uthemann's judgement, he must have kept his philosophical work separate from his Christological, although his work on philosophical definitions and divisions was later appropriated for that purpose.

10. See H. Hugonnard-Roche, *La Logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque: Études sur la transmission des textes de l'Organon et leur interpretation philosophique* (Paris, 2004), 60f., 277.

11. Both works known to us deal with Aristotelian logic. For an overview see ibid., chap. 10, and H. Hugonnard-Roche, 'Du commentaire à la reconstruction: Paul le Perse interprète d'Aristote (sur une lecture du Peri Hermeneias, à propos des modes et des adverbes selon Paul, Ammonius et Boèce)', in J. W. Watt and J. Lössl (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (Ashgate, 2011), 207-24.

12. J. Teixidor, *Aristote en syriaque: Paul le Perse, logician du VIe siècle* (Paris, 2003), 30–1.

13. Ibid., 37–8.

instance of a philosopher seeking to use logic in the service of Christology. According to Barhebraeus, Paul even abandoned his (Christian) faith for Mazdaism when he was overlooked for church promotion—another apostate then.[14] It is, in any case, difficult to say to what extent Paul represents Syriac traditions, as his works were written for the Persian court, although they became influential at a later date.[15]

Pedagogical Contexts

Besides the works of these three individuals, philosophical literature in Syriac can be broadly divided into three genres: translations of Aristotelian texts, a group of texts that we shall call 'definitions literature' (of which more below), and a genre that we may call 'introductions'. The latter group which, like the others, derive from the Alexandrian pedagogic tradition, contain generalisations and commonplaces that formed part of the curriculum of the monastic schools of Late Antiquity. This was a highly standardised genre, often dealing with issues such as the purpose of the (usually Aristotelian) text being commented upon and the usefulness of studying it.[16] It appears with different levels of sophistication both in larger commentaries and standing alone; very often, when a Syriac text is called a commentary it is merely a brief, classroom-type introduction of this sort.[17]

It is important to realise how pedagogically-oriented the Syriac philosophical tradition always was. There are clear indications that both the 'introductions' and the translations were meant for classroom use. Among West Syrian monasteries, a well-defined curriculum was perfected under Severus Sebokht at the monastic school of Qenneshre—there is extant a textbook based probably on one used there in the eighth or ninth century (Vatican MS Syriac 158).[18] Here the main texts of Aristotle are gathered together with the usual sort of introductory literature and various handy tables, all designed to ease the study of Greek logic for the student, who, in this case, would be training for the priesthood or the monastic life. All this is simply in line with Late

14. Barhebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, ed. J. B. Abbeloos and T. J. Lamy (Paris, Louvain, 1877), 3:97.

15. Severus Sebokht gave his work currency among later Syriac philosophers by his translations. Paul was closely read by many later philosophers and teachers, e.g., John bar Zuʿbi and Barhebraeus.

16. The history of this genre is a well worked field, e.g., J. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled Before the Study of an Author, or a Text* (Leiden, 1994), and I. Hadot, 'Les Introductions aux commentaires éxégetiques chez les auteurs néoplatoniciens et les auteurs chrétiens', in M. Tardieu (ed.), *Les règles de l'interprétation* (Paris, 1987), 99–122.

17. E.g., Ishoʿ-bokht of Rew Ardashir, in Cambridge MS Add. 2812. This is probably true of many authors of commentaries mentioned in ʿAbdishoʿ's catalogue.

18. See Tannous' arguments in the present volume for the existence of just such a curriculum. Manuscripts such as this one in the Vatican collection may prove to be material evidence for this.

Antique practice, in which Aristotle was meant to be read only in the company of a teacher and elementary logic was conceived as part of a holistic education rather than as a higher discipline, as in the later classical Arabic philosophy.[19]

The same non-polemical, pedagogical context for Greek logic may be found in the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*, a well known East Syrian treatise which uses the notion of Porphyry's tree of the hierarchy of substances to depict an educational curriculum that mirrors the cosmos itself, wherein logic becomes an aid for the perfection of knowledge and action, a discipline conceived within the same broad perspective as that which typifies Sergius, Probus, and Paul the Persian.[20] When Aristotle was transposed into the Eastern schools (most likely in the time of Mar Aba in the mid sixth century) he does not appear to have been co-opted into the theological battle as such.[21]

The West Syrian philosophers too, seem to have kept the two apart. One knowledgeable and well-read cleric wrote a letter to the philosopher Severus Sebokht asking, among other things, what the point was in learning about syllogisms. Severus responded with a reference to 3 Esdras 4:36 (the whole earth calls upon truth), a classic natural philosopher's plea for the pursuit of knowledge as the soul's search for union with God (in the manner of Sergius) rather than a manifesto for victory over heresy in open debate.[22]

Severus's pupil, the patriarch Athanasius of Balad, wrote his own introduction to logic in the tradition of the aforementioned schoolroom genre. Again we note the lack of any attempt to direct the text towards a particular theological agenda. On reading the work, one would not, in fact, know what one was meant to do with this knowledge, except perhaps to adopt it for its own sake. Much of Athanasius' material is paralleled in John of Damascus' *Fount of Knowledge*, wherein it is manifestly part of a comprehensive defence of 'orthodox' Chalcedonian theology.[23] Even here the attempt is far from

19. For context, see J. W. Watt, 'Grammar, Rhetoric, and the Enkyklios Paideia in Syriac', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 143 (1993), 45–71.

20. Adam H. Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, 2006), 146.

21. The most widespread 'use' of the Aristotelian tradition appears to have been the adoption of the introductory schemata for prologues, such as we see in the *Cause*, in the *Divine Institutes* of Junillus (see below), in the *Bazaar of Heracleides*, and in many other places, as also in the (West Syrian) commentaries of Probus. It must therefore be stressed that this is merely a heuristic structure and has its basis in the commentary tradition, not in Aristotle's writings as such. See, e.g., E. Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface* (Uppsala, 1988), passim.

22. The text is unedited, but there is a summary and discussion in G. J. Reinink, 'Severus Sebokts Brief an den Periodeutes Jonan. Einige Fragen zur aristotelischen Logik', in R. Lavenant (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum III* (Rome, 1983), 97–101.

23. John's treatise was written in three parts, one on philosophy, one on heresy, and one on orthodoxy. The connection of the first with the last is thus implied by the structure as much as inherent in the arguments brought forward. The same material is to a degree subsumed into an anonymous East Syrian text on definitions, traditionally ascribed to Bazud/Michael Malpana.

profound or philosophically nuanced (relying rather more on arguments from patristic authority), but in any case Athanasius' work is not directed to the same end as John's. It was probably designed to fit into the curriculum where we still find it in the tenth century Vatican manuscript mentioned above, that is, at the very start, immediately preceding Athanasius' own translation of Porphyry's *Eisagoge* in a straightforward collection of materials designed to introduce the student to the *Organon* in its shortened form.[24]

The prologues to the commentaries of another Qenneshre alumnus, George of the Arabs, help us to gain a handle on what motivated the scholars of that particular school.[25] George explains clearly why he believed his work to be significant. His vision of philosophy as a 'good' from God that benefits man because man is innately rational is envisaged as the ascent of the soul to divine knowledge, conceived in a Platonist manner.[26] He even explains the three-fold shape of the syllogism on the basis of the mystery of Trinity.[27] Nowhere, by contrast, is there any hint that this material might be handy in defeating a Chalcedonian or Nestorian in open debate.

In the pre-ʿAbbāsid period, at least, we have come across no context in which Aristotle was being pressed into the service of theological polemic. The nature of manuscript evidence would suggest rather that logic was seen as common property and philosophy the one area of cultural life in which there was no barrier to the literature of one confession being used in the schools of the other. Eastern manuscripts frequently carry philosophical texts of West Syrian origin—we might expect this in the case of Sergius, given his earlier era, but hardly for Jacob of Edessa, himself a fairly hard-line bishop whose translation of the *Categories* nonetheless became the standard school text in East and West alike. The master of the Qenneshre school, Severus Sebokht was as well known in the East as in the West and he himself was in turn strongly influenced by Paul the Persian, an Easterner and another philosopher who did not hold his own religious confession in high esteem. ʿAbdishoʿ's catalogue of (Eastern) writers contains three 'slips', that is, authors who belonged really to the other confession—and all three are philosophers: Sergius of Reshaina, Jacob of Edessa, and Aḥūdummeh.

24. For the difference between the shorter and longer *Organon* in use among the Syrians, see J. W. Watt, 'Al-Farabi and the History of the Syriac *Organon*', in G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone. Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* (Piscataway NJ, 2008), 751–78. Athanasius himself was the translator of some of the works only included in the longer *Organon*, and a few elements from the *Sophistical Refutations* find their way into his *Introduction*.

25. The text is analysed in D. R. Miller, 'George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes, on True Philosophy', *ARAM* 5 (1993), 303–20, on which I am here dependent.

26. Ibid., 318.

27. Ibid., 314–5.

The Church of the East maintained an even stronger disjunction between philosophy and theology. East Syrian ascetic writers could be truly vitriolic when distinguishing their own spirituality from that of the 'pedantic schoolmen'.[28] Unlike Greek authors, the Syrian ascetics did not use the term 'true philosophy' to mean ascetic spirituality, but preferred to contrast the two. It even seems that the curricula were barely harmonised. Barhebraeus tells us that the doctors whose books the East Syrians read—he means in their 'official' school curriculum—were Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ḥenanishoʿ, Ishoʿ bar Nun, Paul, and Barsauma, while the mystical and ascetical books were reserved for men of more mature years, and when Dadishoʿ Qaṭraya mentions 'the fathers', he has in mind men such as Evagrius, Mark the Monk, Macarius the Great, and Isaiah of Scete.[29]

Under this head we might also deal with the obscure figure of a second 'Paul the Persian', a theologian/philosopher who has sometimes been called as witness to the influence of the *Organon* on East Syrian theology. This Paul is the supposed sixth century author behind the Latin text known as Junillus' *Divine Institutes*.[30] The text has often been quoted as a marker of the philosophical sophistication of the School of Nisibis, at which Paul seems to have been a teacher. Sophisticated it may have been; philosophical it was not, and it hardly competes with the contemporary work of the three Syriac philosophers we discussed earlier.[31] The *Institutes* neither demonstrate a new structural incorporation of Greek logic into exegesis, nor testify to a real philosophical element in the curriculum at the school at that time. Junillus himself even remarks in his prologue how *un*-secular the School of Nisibis actually is by comparison with Greek schools.[32]

28. For Isaac, see Becker, *Fear of God*, 186–7. Isaac refers to philosophy as a 'looking down', in contrast to asceticism, which is a 'looking up', an attitude that contrasts sharply with that adopted by Sergius of Reshaina (see further below). Dadishoʿ Qaṭraya (189) wants to set ascetic practice apart from the pedantic work of the schoolmen in what are often called the 'Masoretic' traditions of grammatical and phonological analysis (their real name was *qeryata da-shmahe*); Simon of Taybuteh (191) also mentions Masorah (*qeryana prisha*) and Aristotle (*organon d-yulpana*).

29. A. Merx, *Historia artis grammaticae apud Syros* (Leipzig, 1889), 2; F. Jullien, *Le monachisme en Perse: La réforme d'Abraham le Grand, père des moines de l'Orient* (Leuven, 2008), 172–6.

30. M. Maas, E. G. Matthews, and H. Kihn, *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean: Junillus Africanus and the Instituta regularia divinae legis* (Tübingen, 2003), provides the most recent comprehensive text and study. Maas attempts to uncouple the text from its purported Syriac and Theodoran background. For a tempering of this position, see A. H. Becker, 'The Dynamic Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Sixth Century: Greek, Syriac, and Latin', in S. F. Johnson (ed.), *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity: Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism* (Aldershot, 2006), 29–47, who also questions how much Aristotle really has to do with any of this (42).

31. The remarks of Edward Mathews (in Maas, 25–6) do not amount to much on Paul's side. The prolegomena had already been applied Biblically as early as Origen, and, although they derive from the Alexandrian peripatetic tradition, there is nothing innately philosophical about them, and their use in numerous East Syrian texts of the period may be a sign of curriculum standardisation but hardly of the use of logic.

32. Maas, Matthews, and Kihn, *Exegesis*, 119–20.

Several East Syrian works of the mid sixth century, the *Institutes* among them, show clearly the influence of the prolegomena form, an important aspect of the Greek commentaries (among other genres), and this has sometimes been taken to indicate a new stage in the Syriac appropriation of the Greek curriculum.[33] While this is most likely the case, what it does not imply is a self-conscious adoption of the hard edge of Greek logic into theological debate. To the extent that the Theodoran exegesis reflected in the *Institutes* and other contemporary East Syriac texts is shot through with philosophical terms, this element pre-existed its transformation into Syriac guise, though the peripatetic influence on the Antiochene school, like so much else, entered in by way of the commentary tradition rather from a reading of Aristotle, and was attenuated at best.[34]

Theological Literature and its Philosophical Background

It is difficult, then, to locate within Syriac philosophy any tendency towards the use of Aristotelian logic as an instrument for Christological proof. How about when we turn to theological literature itself? Here is the nub of our problem. To what extent, if at all, was Aristotle integrated into the task of theological reflection and inter(or intra) communal polemic? Do we find there any sense that the study of Greek philosophy (especially of logic) had any impact on the way that such discussions were developed? There are two spheres in which to search for any clues, first, 'scholastic' texts in which the forms and material of Aristotelian logic have been deployed to prove a theological argument, and second, the broader arena of public disputation.[35] Let us take the latter case first, for it has often been suggested that it was here that the exercise of formal logic was the trump card.

Public Disputation

It would hardly be a matter of great difficulty to show that 'victory' in public disputations had little if anything to with cogency of theological or philosophical argument.[36] One must of course distinguish between 'set-piece' disputations

33. Primarily in Brock, 'From Antagonism to Assimilation'.

34. L. Abramowski, 'Perpatetisches bei späten Antiochenern', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 79 (1968), 358–62, shows, inter alia, that Andrew of Samosata (a Greek-Syriac bilingual) made use of theories drawn from Alexander of Aphrodisias in his theological letters.

35. In his essay in the present volume, Tannous usefully distinguishes two levels of disputation, a 'higher' official type, and a lower 'everyday' type, which he supposes may have been a common feature of the cosmopolitan culture of the Syriac-speaking communities and monasteries.

36. See, e.g., Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995), 105–7.

such as Justinian was wont to organise, which were mostly for show, and those in which real capital was at stake, such as occurred from time to time between 'Miaphysite' and 'Nestorian' Christians in Persia. Here the two communities genuinely vied for official favour and the outcomes of such debates were of some moment. While there was some attempt to introduce Aristotelian arguments into the 'set-piece' variety, albeit in a highly rhetorical manner, when it comes to these 'live' debates any type of formal argument is notable by its absence and matters other than logical proof take the ascendency.

The most famous exponent of public debate in Syriac known to us was Simeon of Beth Arsham, an early sixth century figure whose nickname was The Debater and who travelled extensively around Mesopotamia and Persia looking for contests of this nature, which (apparently) he invariably won. His biographer, John of Ephesus, lets us into the details of one especially famous debate in which Simeon and the 'Nestorian' Babai were to be judged by a Persian *marzbān*, who was not, it seems, committed to either side in advance.[37] Although John appears to call Simeon's argument 'logical', logic in anything like its normal meaning is wholly absent.[38] The role of epideictic oratory and political manipulation, on the other hand, were in the ascendancy, the real purpose of the debate being to persuade the *marzbān* that Simeon's own tradition was normative throughout Christendom and that his opponent was the deviant. This, in fact, matches well with the general tenor of sixth century theology which focused on identifying one's own position with that of the fathers of the true church rather than with logical or even Biblical inference. Simeon was clearly a master at this; all that we know of his life and writings suggest that his contact with philosophy was meagre at best and when he has the opportunity to display his knowledge of philosophy, in his letter about the School of Nisibis, he merely satirises its masters by listing their nicknames, more in the anti-intellectual tradition of the ascetics.[39]

Another phenomenon entirely seems to be before us in the case of the caliph al-Mahdi's request for a translation of Aristotle's *Topics* in order to facilitate the conduct of official religious disputations at his court. The patriarch Timothy I, as recipient of the request, in seeking out Greek and Syriac philosophical texts from the monasteries to assist him, thereby marks a new moment in the 'Eastern' reception of Greek philosophy, the details of which are outside the scope of this chapter. Although Syriac disputations may possibly lie at the origins of Islamic *kalām*,[40] the former interacted with Greek logic at a vastly less sophisticated level

37. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, PO 17 (Paris, 1923).

38. Ibid., 151. Actually, Brooks' translation reads this into the text: John of Ephesus does not use any technical term for 'logical', calling it merely a *šariyra melta*, which, in context, should be translated simply as 'correct argument'.

39. J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (Rome, 1719–28), 1:346–58.

40. M. A. Cook, 'The Origins of Kalam', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (1980), 32–43.

than was the case in ninth or tenth century Baghdad among both Christian and Muslim philosophers engaged in the business of defending their faith.[41]

We should note in passing an important and instructive example of a theological debate that appears to involve Aristotle a great deal, viz. in the biography of the martyr Mar Qardagh.[42] What is at stake here, however, is cosmology and physics (rather than logic), and this in a very unsophisticated manner more reminiscent of the rhetorical name-dropping of certain Greek texts we shall examine shortly; moreover, Aristotelian physics was certainly never, as far as we can tell, taught in the schools.[43] The text seems to be related rather to the genre of disputations maintained at the courts of the Sasanian kings and owes as little to genuine philosophy (or school-philosophy) as Justinian's debates did.[44]

Demonstrations and Definitions

There are two broad genres in which we may expect to find Greek logic playing a central role in theological reflection and polemic, both known throughout the Greek and Syriac intellectual environments. We might label these 'syllogistic demonstrations', and 'definitions'. In the first, syllogistic structures, or even lists of syllogisms, are built up in order to establish Aristotelian 'demonstrations'.

41. See J. W. Watt, 'The Strategy of the Baghdad Philosophers: The Aristotelian Tradition as a Common Motif in Christian and Islamic Thought', in J. J. Van Ginkel, H. L. Murre, and T. M. van den Berg (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam* (Leuven, 2005), 151–65. Theodore bar Koni does count as a pioneer in this field, on the Syriac side. He discusses the *Organon* in some detail. Although his treatment is still only that of the classroom, it is framed in an overall plan of refuting Islamic theology with a comprehensive Christian apology; see S. H. Griffith, 'Theodore bar Koni's Scholion: A Nestorian Summa Contra Gentiles from the First Abbasid Century', in N. Garsoïan, T. Matthews, and R. Thomson (eds.), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington DC, 1982), 53–72, at 65: 'The impetus for the production of a school manual of this sort ultimately lies in the apologetic imperative brought about by Muslim polemical pressure on the Nestorian community in Iraq'. To this later stage also most likely belongs the anti-Jewish *Discourse on the Priesthood*, which makes some use of arguments from the *Topics*, discussed by A. H. Becker, 'Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*: Questioning the 'Parting of the Ways' outside the Roman Empire', in A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen, 2003), 373–92.

42. Joel Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley, 2006), 180–205.

43. Sergius of Reshaina, too, drew on Philoponus' arguments against the eternity of the world, but even this does not approach the sophistication required for a philosophical demonstration such as Philoponus himself attempts. King, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On the Principles of the Universe*'.

44. There are many more examples of public debates in Persia that were politically sensitive and usually a matter of making the right connections; see, e.g., G. J. Reinink, 'Babai the Great's *Life of George* and the Propagation of Doctrine in the late Sassanian Empire', in J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Watt (eds.), *Portraits of Spiritual Authority: Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient* (Leiden, 1999), 171–93.

The other involves precise philosophical definitions of key terms that are asserted in such a way that a particular theological position appears naturally buttressed by the pillars of Aristotle's *Organon*.

To begin with the first, which in sixth and seventh century Greek theology was realised as *aporiai* or *epaporēmata*, often sets of paradoxes and their solutions laid out in terms of, and sometimes called, 'syllogisms'. Uthemann calls the genre 'syllogistic' and Grillmeier sees in it the introduction of Aristotelian philosophy into theology.[45] The syllogisms of John of Caesarea against the Manichaeans (the attribution is questionable but of little consequence here) is one of the clearest examples of the genre, and John incorporated the same arguments into his homilies against the Manichaeans.[46] Here the reader is presented with a series of proofs against a given position, in this case the origin of evil, which are couched as syllogisms. On the whole, however, they are always superficial; they are often not syllogisms at all, or else they are trivial ones; they do not involve sophisticated knowledge of formal logic, nor do they indicate any awareness of the discussions found in the philosophical commentaries. They are often false syllogisms (i.e., based on particulars rather than universals) and owe, if anything, rather more to Stoic conditional logic than to Aristotelian. Sometimes, John appears to refer directly to a theory from the *Categories*, for instance that 'things other than [those having substantial existence, οὐσιωδῶς], such as bitterness and sweetness and whatever is seen or known through colours, fall into [the category of] quantity or relation or result from actions'.[47] This is superficially based on something from Aristotle (*Cat.* 9a29), but there sweetness and bitterness are specifically given as qualities, rather than as the things John describes. These texts do not constitute evidence for any thoroughgoing application of Aristotelian theory to theology and in practice constitute little more then rhetorical 'name-dropping'.

Ps-Eulogius of Alexandria presents us with a syllogistically-structured argument that works as follows:[48]

45. K.-H. Uthemann, 'Syllogistik im Dienst der Orthodoxie. Zwei unedierte texte byzantinischer Kontroverstheologie des 6.Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 30 (1981), 103–12, at 107; A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche II/1* (1991), 94. There is no space here to delve into the wider issue of the influence of Aristotelian philosophy on Greek theology in different periods. In general I presuppose (and do not need to repeat) the work of D. T. Runia, 'Festugière Revisited: Aristotle in the Greek Patres', *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989), 1–34, and Frede, 'Les Catégories et les pères', although the latter is perhaps too kind to the philosophical credentials of the so-called neo-Chalcedonians and to John of Damascus. For a harsher assessment of the neo-Chalcedonians, see D. Krausmüller, 'Aristotelianism and the Disintegration of the Late Antique Theological Discourse', in J. W. Watt and J. Lössl (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (Ashgate, 2011), 151–64, although we are here in the realm of ontology rather than logic.

46. Both texts in M. Richard (ed.), *Iohannis Caesariensis opera quae supersunt* (Turnhout, 1977).

47. Adversus Manichaeos Homilia I:35–42, Richard ed.

48. From the ἐπαπορήσεις of Ps.-Eulogius of Alexandria in F. Diekamp (ed.), *Doctrina Patrum de incarnatione Verbi* (Münster, 1907), 153:6–15.

> God the Word is either of the same substance as the assumed flesh or else of a different substance.
>
> - If the former, then how does he not become three or four, since another person (*prosōpon*) is [then] being introduced?
>   - For 'of the same nature' and 'of the same substance' are naturally said of individuals being brought together into a single substance,
>   - and are also attributed to those hypostases that are referred to one and the same species,
>   - but 'of the same substance' is predicated of hypostases.
> - But if flesh is of a different substance from that of God the Word, then how is Christ not two natures?

All this amounts to once formed into a syllogism is, 'all substances are natures; Christ is two substances; therefore Christ is two natures', which would be a trivial example. The centre of the argument really lies in the synonymous interpretation of 'substance' and 'nature' but the syllogistic format of the whole argument guides the reader away from this point.

One further example will indicate the types of argument that are actually smuggled in under this form:[49]

> Of things which are one nature, their definition is the same, while of things whose definition is the same, their existence is 'of one substance'. But in no way is the divinity of Christ of one substance with his humanity, even according to them. The definition of these things is not, therefore, one [i.e., the same]. But of those things whose definition is not one, their natures are always clearly differentiated.

The 'syllogism' here is simply, 'All "co-naturals" are "consubstantial"; Christ's humanity and divinity are not consubstantial; therefore Christ's humanity and divinity are not co-natural'. This is a 'Baroco' syllogism (i.e., universal affirmative premise + particular negative premise = particular negative conclusion).[50] The second premise, however, is not a syllogistic proposition of the type 'some x are (not) y' but is just a particular;[51] such types of propositions were excluded from the syllogistic[52] save among the enthymemes, which are described as rhetorical rather than assertoric or demonstrative syllogisms.[53] Such propositions

49. From the *Thirty Chapters of Leontius against Severus*, Ibid., 155:19–23.

50. Another example of the pattern: 'every virtue is attended with discretion; some kinds of zeal are not attended with discretion; therefore some kinds of zeal are not virtues'.

51. Many 'patristic syllogisms' are of this trivial type, tantamount to 'Every man has two legs; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates has two legs'.

52. *Prior Analytics*, 43a25–44; only universal statements should be used, 47b27.

53. *Prior Analytics*, 70a11, 68b10–14.

were permitted in Stoic logic whose unacknowledged influence may be detectable here.[54] In the above case it is the first premise that is actually the point at issue. It presupposes Aristotle's discussion about synonyms in the *Categories* but the equation of 'nature' and 'substance' presupposed here cannot be (logically) upheld on that basis alone.

This form of theological polemic also made its way also into the Syriac environment. This is not surprising, given the profound interconnectedness of the two linguistic spheres until at least the ninth century. For instance, a well known text of this genre, Probus' *Epaporēmata against the Jacobites*, had evidently been used in a discussion of some sort (whether oral or literary we cannot tell) in a Syrian monastery, for one of the monks concerned sent a letter about it to the foremost philosopher of his day, George of the Arabs, seeking responses. Probus had said:[55]

> This single nature that you confess in Christ, is it created or uncreated? If uncreated, it is of God alone; but if created, it is that of a simple man. If you say 'both created and uncreated' you find yourself unwittingly confessing two natures.

George simply substitutes 'hypostases' or even 'sons' for 'natures' to show that just the same argument can be used against the Chalcedonians:[56]

> This one hypostasis which you confess Christ to have—is it created, or uncreated, or both created and uncreated? Now if it is uncreated, it is only of God, but if it is created, then it is only of a mere man. If you say both, you are found out to be like Nestorius, for you unwillingly confess two hypostases. (Alternatively): This one Christ and one Son that you confess: is he created, or uncreated, or created and uncreated? If uncreated, he is only God, but if he is created, then he is only human. And if you will say [he is both] created and uncreated, you yourself are found to be just like Diodore, Theodore, and Nestorius, for you confess two Christs and two Sons while not wanting to; I speak according to your cunning reasonings.

54. 'The Stoics think that the truth of singular propositions is a proper object of knowledge and that therefore proofs may have singular conclusions and premises': Michael Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford, 1987), 117.

55. J. H. Declerck, 'Probus, l'ex-Jacobite et ses Epaporemata pros Iakobitas', *Byzantion* 53 (1983), 213–32, at 229,6–9.

56. George of the Arabs, Ep.1, 1.2, in the forthcoming edition and translation of the letters by J. Tannous (Gorgias Press), to whom I am grateful for sharing his text with me prior to its publication. For the demonstration that George's letter is directed at a broad range of 'problems' that are found in both Greek and Syriac collections (especially the *Doctrina Patrum*), see J. Tannous, 'Between Christology and Kalam? The Life and Letters of George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes', in G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone. Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* (Piscataway NJ, 2008), 643–88. An earlier translation may be found in V. Ryssel, *Georgs der Araberbischofs. Gedichte und Briefe* (Leipzig, 1891), 81.

One hardly needs Aristotle to learn how to make this sort of dialectical argument.[57] Had George wanted to apply Aristotelian logic here he could, for example, have discussed homonymy and argued that the term 'hypostasis' does not always mean the same thing. However, another Syriac writer of a similar period, Michael Malpana, uses the same argument seriously to defend the dual-hypostasis that George here satirises:[58]

> If the hypostasis of the Son is one, how does it differ now after the birth from the virgin from that which it was previously, when he was not yet born of the virgin? If it is the same one, then he did not take anything from the virgin; however, if it is one and the other, then he was not that former one.

The editors of this text are wide of the mark when they call this 'proceeding by syllogisms'.[59]

George, however, does pick his moments and, in places in his correspondence, we do find an attempt to link the fields of logic and Christology in a manner reminiscent of that of Marius Victorinus or Boethius in the West, or of John Philoponus (whose works were known to George) in the East. Hence, for example, he argues that a division of hypostases necessarily implies a two-ness on the grounds that 'number' is located within the Aristotelian category of quantity.[60] George was both capable of and interested in using his understanding of logical theory (as it was held in the Alexandrian tradition of which he was a part),[61] even though the philosophical material he produced (commentaries for the most part) contains no indication at all of this aspect of his studies, and most of his theological œuvre is devoid of philosophy.

We have yet to deal with the above-mentioned 'definitions' literature as a second method by which philosophy might be directly deployed in theological reasoning. Ever since the introduction of the term *homoousios* into the Nicene creed, the problem of defining more precisely the meanings of certain key

57. Although a reading of the *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations* might help, it was outside the context of such disputations that the Muslim *mutakallimūn* (dialectical theologians) became interested in those latter books of the *Organon*.

58. L. Abramowski and A. E. Goodman (eds.), *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts* (Cambridge, 1972), 1:106,20–107,2; trans. 2:62, 6–10.

59. Ibid., p. xxxv.

60. Ep3, 6.1.14 (ed. Tannous) = Ryssel, 105–6.

61. His commentary is directly dependent on Ammonius, among others. Its opening is evidence enough of this, for he says 'if one omits the phrase "it is necessary" (*chrē*) [i.e., from the opening of the Aristotelian text], then the opening is more ancient'. But the word for 'ancient' is *'atiyqa*, which is most likely a corruption from *'aṭiyqa* (Attic), as Ammonius begins his commentary with the remark that the word *chrē* may be omitted as being an Attic expression (ed. M. Wallies, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, 4/6:12,5). The close link thereby established between Ammonius and George at the beginning of their lemmatic treatments of the text places George in that Late Platonist tradition rather than making him one of the 'Church Fathers'.

words (substance, person, hypostasis) had been central to theological debate, and for philosophers in Late Antiquity too (as for Aristotle) definition was the cornerstone of good logic. We see attempts among the neo-Chalcedonians to use Aristotelian definitions as a way out of the terminological morass of post-Chalcedonian discourse, in which the new theological dicta had to be coordinated with the patristic tradition.[62]

There are several examples in Syriac manuscripts of what we might call a definitions genre of this type, i.e. lists of key terms with their 'true' definitions (*tḥume*).[63] An example of the more pedestrian kind, designed for the classroom situation, may be found in an anonymous collection entitled *Philosophical Questions and Problems*,[64] although it means by this primarily the definitions of terms, e.g. What is *melta*? It is "a signifying sound" (cf. *De Int*. 16a20); What is *zna* (quality, ποιός)? It is "a word that signifies how a predicate relates to its subject."

A rather interesting example of the genre belongs to the East Syrian ascetical writer, 'Enanisho', otherwise responsible for the collection of lives of desert fathers known as the *Book of Paradise*. We are told that he composed 'divisions and definitions' (*pulage wa-tḥume*), which he wrote upon the wall of his monk's cell and on which he even wrote a commentary.[65] The genre *pulaga* usually refers to a Porphyrian tree (or a development thereof),[66] while *tḥuma* means a definition text. 'Enanisho''s philosophical work clearly parallels his work on the patristic Masora (which Thomas of Marga praises very highly) and on lexicography, but the location of his writing (on his cell wall!), as well as his other work, again warn us away from thinking of his 'divisions and definitions' as being meant for use in disproving heretical opinions.

The most sophisticated example of the genre, and really an extended development of it, is Jacob of Edessa's *Encheiridion (Handbook)* in which the learned bishop seeks to define a series of philosophical terms that have been used in theology; primarily 'nature', but also, in connection with this, 'substance', 'person', and 'species'. He attempts to describe the meanings of these words so as to expand the semantic ranges of the given Syriac equivalents for each. The Syriac philosophical lexicon would then become better aligned with its parent Greek.

62. Krausmüller, 'Aristotelianism and the Disintegration of the Late Antique Theological Discourse' (n.42) provides excellent examples of how unsuccessful this could be.

63. E.g., MS BL Add 12,154, nos. 25, 32.

64. *šuala wa-peleta pilusupiya*: G. Furlani, 'Un receuil d'énigmes philosophiques en langue syriaque', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 21 (1919), 113–36. This text is based partly on Sergius of Reshaina's commentary, for evidence of which see D. King, 'The Genesis and Development of a Logical Lexicon in the Syriac Tradition', in J. W. Watt and J. Lössl (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle* (Aldershot, 2011), 225–38.

65. Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors*, ed. E. A. W. Budge [London, 1893], 80; trans. 178.

66. Such as are found in numerous Syriac manuscripts in slightly varying forms, e.g., BL Add. 12,138 , Vat. Syr 158, and Mingana Syr. 84.

Jacob's general discussion of the meaning of the word 'nature' attempts to demonstrate a wide discrepancy in usage between philosophers and theologians, to the detriment in fact of the latter. For Jacob it is the usage of the Greek terms according to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that is definitive and should be observed. It is because so many of the definitions of 'nature' require in turn the term 'substance' (*ousia*, in Jacob's Syriac *ʾiytuta*) that the latter must also be defined, and here Jacob draws on the *Categories* and on Philoponus' commentary. As in the case of 'nature' he must again point out the difference between logicians, who by 'substance' mean 'primary substance' (individual *ousia*, which is equivalent to *hupostasis*) and only use the word to refer to 'universal substance' metaphorically—and the theologians, who use the word principally in the latter sense. Syriac theologians come under fire again for using *yata* sometimes to mean 'primary substance' (i.e., first *ousia*), other times for 'hypostasis'; he explains the Greek terms and how Syriac translators had never succeeded in establishing a clear one-to-one between them. There is also a difference in the definition of 'species', which some theologians have used as equivalent to *qnuma*.[67]

The purpose of the *Encheiridion* is evidently related in some sense to Christology, by the choice of terms discussed, but this is never made explicit. Jacob's investigation into the exact background to the keywords of the debate suggest that he believed the doctrinal errors to have arisen as a result of differing (and incorrect) understandings and translations of Greek philosophical terms. In a sense this is comparable to the argument made by Philoxenus about the translation of the New Testament, viz. that care needed to be taken when reading translations written by Syriac authors of an earlier period who may have been less attuned than 'we' to the fine distinctions of the Greek language. In any case, in this text of the early eighth century we have apparently the first genuine attempt, albeit a rather indirect one, to make use of Aristotelian logic in Christological discourse. The overall purpose envisaged, however, is clearly to compare and contrast the usages of these words in their traditional philosophical contexts (i.e., as used by the 'pagans') with their usages in theological contexts (i.e., as used by the Church Fathers). The work is thus of a type with those that aim to sharpen the ever shaky relationship between Greek philosophy and Christian theology, to appropriate the former without compromising the autochthony of the latter. It may well be, but we cannot be sure, that Jacob's

67. Text in G. Furlani, 'L'*Encheiridion* di Giacomo di Edessa nel testo siriaco', *Rendiconti dell' Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, ser. 6, vol. 4 (1928), 222–49; see esp. the study of H. Hugonnard-Roche, 'Le vocabulaire philosophique de l'être en syriaque, d'après des textes de Sergius de Reš'ainā et Jacques d'Édesse', in J. E. Montgomery (ed.), *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank* (Leuven, 2006), 101–25.

definitions were elsewhere used within the context of inter-confessional polemic, for instance to 'prove' that two natures must mean two hypostases, but they do not appear to have been devised with such an end in view.[68]

We have suggested a number of times that when the name of Aristotle did crop up in important theological battles this was more a rhetorical flourish than a genuine attempt to integrate the two disciplines. Before drawing some overall conclusions, it may be instructive to examine an example of this phenomenon. In 775 there was a dispute over the succession to the catholicosate in the Church of the East between the eventual winner Ḥenanishoʿ and a caliphal nominee George, the latter being backed by the most influential ecclesiastic in the church hierarchy, the bishop of Kashkar. The latter wrote a document denouncing Ḥenanishoʿ which he called his 'antiphasis' and in which he asserts the privileges of his see as if this were a matter of syllogistic logic and thus incontrovertible. Ḥenanishoʿ framed his response as a thinly disguised satire against this 'antiphasis':[69]

> I, Ḥenanishoʿ . . ., when this *antiphasis* [of his] that battles between our assertion (*kataphasis*) [i.e. of the patriarchate] and their negation (*apophasis*) [of it][70] established truly its falsehood by means of the logical premises of an assertoric discourse,[71] then the very same predication of ours . . . from the same subject of theirs, and, to speak on the basis of the conclusion [of a syllogism],[72] they are not synonymous with one another.[73] The predicate and the subject are of the same quality not on the basis of some other things nor on the basis of different parts but by means of dialectical and analytical terms; they established and confirmed their justice through apodeictic demonstrations, then. . . .

The number of transliterated terms taken from the logic curriculum is satirically meant and the author mimics expressions that both he and his fellow bishops would doubtless (half) recall from their days of higher education. This

68. We should not be fooled into thinking of Jacob and his fellows as ivory-tower philosophers. Qenneshre was better known in its day as a centre of ascetical training and achievement than of philosophy and was home to as much superstition as was any place; Michael Penn, 'The Composition of the Qenneshrê Fragment', in E. M. Meyers and P. V.M. Flesher (eds.), *Aramaic in Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity* (Winona Lake IN, 2010). Jacob himself was intimately involved with the day-to-day life of his church and the interaction of its members with their Muslim neighbours.

69. J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Synodicon orientale, ou, Recueil de synodes nestoriens* (Paris, 1902), 249–50, trans. 521. The text is very corrupt; the translation here presented is a best guess; Chabot attempted no translation of these lines.

70. Cf. Arist., *De Int*. 17a33ff.

71. *De Int*. 17a5.

72. *sunphrazmayit* (from the Greek *sumperasma*), more usually rendered by the word *kunaša* (e.g., Athanasius of Balad), but the loanword was used also by the translator of the *Prior Analytics*.

73. *Cat*. 1a6,3b7.

game serves no real purpose other than a rhetorical one. It indicates how the shared schoolroom experiences of Syrian bishops could be used in a fairly hostile exchange as a form of bonding, almost something like a shared joke. It was this sense of innate cultural superiority that the presence of Aristotle in the schools engendered, even if it was only a question of name-dropping that allowed the ecclesiastics to retain their cultural presence in the altered climate of the Islamic œcumene, under which the ownership of Aristotle would soon became theological capital of far greater moment.

Conclusions

So what was logic for? We have drawn a blank when looking for evidence that Syriac writers were interested in its function as a weapon in theological debate, but we have also glimpsed some of the truer reasons, although these probably differed from place to place and from period to period, especially across the confessional divide between East and West Syrians. What little we know about the study of Greek philosophy in the Church of the East is focused upon the School of Nisibis and similar institutions and it is from the context of the schoolroom that most of our Eastern texts derive, texts that are often of a very basic nature, meant as summaries for students rather than attempts to contribute to philosophy itself or its application. We should also note again the importance of the introductory schemata applied to texts, a practice derived from the lecture hall experience for which is was devised, another reminder that the philosophy adopted by the Syrians was specifically that of the Late Antique Alexandrian curriculum, a fact that continued to influence the way in which Greek philosophy was received in Arabic too.

The 'golden age' of Arabic philosophy does, however, see the Syrians making good use of their philosophical traditions to construct philosophically-sophisticated apologias (e.g., Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, Theodore Abū Qurra),[74] and we can see the beginnings of this tendency in Timothy I and perhaps in Theodore bar Koni. But it is the influence of the ʿAbbāsid interest in philosophy that is the prime motivator here—it is a response and not an initiative on the part of Syriac philosophers.[75] In the Muslim period there was little other than reason upon which any shared discourse could take place, whereas the inter-confessional polemics of an earlier age had other (often more important) bases, e.g. taking ownership of patristic tradition, Biblical proof-texting etc.

74. Although the Christian logicians of tenth-century Baghdad appear to have moved in very different circles from their predecessors, they were taught mostly in monastic schools, where they received their initial training in Greek philosophy.

75. D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society* (London, 1998), 66 and passim. While we can see clearly what Timothy was about when translating the *Topics*, this hardly applies to its first Syriac translator, Athanasius of Balad.

In the West Syrian tradition, there was at least one strong attempt in Late Antiquity to integrate the teaching of Greek logic more thoroughly into the cultural framework of the Church. Sergius of Reshaina,[76] as well as Aristotelian commentator,[77] was a major translator of Galen, of Dionysius the Areopagite, and most likely of parts of Evagrius of Pontus.[78] As he outlines in his *Treatise on the Spiritual Life*, Sergius was seeking to establish parallel courses of spiritual education which complemented one another, one based on the Alexandrian curriculum of the Greek sciences (which begins with logic), the other based on the levels of mystical experience described by Evagrius. In the Alexandrian system, one began with Aristotle, especially the Logic, as a first step towards the real aim, which was then to read Plato and thereby to reach the higher subject matter of metaphysics and 'theology'. In Sergius' system, Plato was dropped in favour of the equally 'mystico-theological' writings of Evagrius and ps-Dionysius, while retaining formal logic as a crucial first stage and instrument in the attainment of the higher goal.[79] In this way he hoped to demonstrate the importance of both, and indeed most 'serious' readers of Aristotle in Syriac seem also to have been followers of ps-Dionysius.[80]

Paul the Persian presents us with a comparable vision in his general introduction to philosophy; here the soul achieves harmony with the One through the heightening of the philosopher's mind, i.e. he repeats the Neoplatonist tradition and, as we saw earlier, makes a strong distinction between faith and science. The great Syriac philosopher Barhebraeus read Paul's work and picked up the same theme, entitling his summary of logic *The Book of the Pupils of the Eye*, imitating a theme discussed by Paul, that of the soul's eye which, by training in philosophy, attains a vision of the higher realms of knowledge. We have seen too how George of the Arabs presents a similar trajectory towards the Christian ideal by starting with logic.

In George we did also see hints of an interest in making use of 'definitions' in order to uncover fallacy, and the same concern may lie behind Jacob's *Encheiridion* as well as some of the handbooks and introductions used in the schools, and certainly with the era of Theodore bar Koni and Timothy, who were faced with new opponents, this would have appeared natural. The Eastern ascetics who vilified philosophy did so because they saw it as nothing but a first

76. We do not know enough about Probus to reconstruct the context in which he worked; Paul the Persian wrote his works outside of a Syriac context altogether.

77. It should be noted that he planned a complete set of commentaries, although only the first was completed.

78. The argument is made in A. Guillaumont, *Les Képhalaia gnostica d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris, 1962), 215–27.

79. Something comparable to Sergius's Evagrian *cursus* was incorporated into the Syriac introductory teaching on definitions of genera and species; Hugonnard-Roche, *Logique d'Aristote*, 112.

80. Sergius's system is uncovered and explicated in Watt's recent article (see note 6 above).

step towards their higher goals; Sergius, George, and the others probably agreed, but they concluded that one must therefore take that philosophy seriously and on its own terms.[81]

Postscript

Readers will notice the variant conclusions reached respectively by this paper and that in the current volume by Jack Tannous. In broad terms, the latter argues that the philosophical curriculum at Qenneshre was conceived by its inventors as a means to strengthen the hands of priests and monks of their own confession as they sought to draw boundaries, both intellectually and socially, demarcating themselves from Chalcedonians and Nestorians. We have suggested, however, that Christological polemic was not the principal aim of Syriac philosophy. Is there a fundamental difference of opinion here or is it only apparent?

First, in response to a number of specific points made by Tannous. He has suggested that a philosophical curriculum was developed by the West Syrians ('Jacobites') during the seventh century, principally at Qenneshre, by pointing out the remarkable coincidence that the curriculum as Barhebraeus describes it many centuries later contains most of the texts we know to have been re-translated and edited by West Syrian scholars in the seventh and eighth centuries. I believe that we have offered support to this conjecture by observing that Vat. Syr. 158 seems to be an example of the philosophical element in that curriculum. However, I think it should be noted that the East Syrians, although late starters, were no less interested in Aristotle. Barhebraeus' description of the 'Nestorian' curriculum, focusing as it does on ascetic theologians, matches the rhetoric of the East Syrian commentators and theologians who, as I mentioned above, distanced themselves from what they perceived as the impurities of 'lower', 'secular' learning.[82] In doing this, then, Barhebraeus, is representing only one strand within the Church of the East's pedagogy; it is a fact not to be ignored that many of our manuscripts of Syriac philosophical texts are of Eastern origin, that Easterners read the same seventh- and eighth-century translations of Aristotle as did the Westerners, and that the first Syriac theologians systematically to attempt to apply Aristotelian logic to the defence of the faith were Sylvanus of Qardu and his better known successor, Theodore bar Koni, both Easterners.

81. It is difficult to pin down the difference between the two trajectories: the anti-philosophical pressure group sought the higher forms of ascetic practice and may have viewed Sergius and his ilk as 'Origenist'; for this possibility, see D. King, 'Origenism in Sixth Century Syria. The Case of a Syriac Manuscript of the Pagan Philosophers', in A. Fürst (ed.), *Origenes und seine Bedeutung für die Theologie- und Geistesgeschichte Europas und des Vorderen Orients* (Münster, 2010). The present essay is meant as the first of a pair, and the companion piece (in press) will attempt to explore further some of these themes.

82. This point is elaborated at greater length in A. Becker, *Fear of God*.

How far can we agree with the idea that the Syriac-speaking churches were full of individuals and small groups enagaging in theological disputations? I do not believe that Tannous has provided strong evidence of this-he says that 'there must have been a whole layer . . . of lower-level arguments [because] . . . points of overlap provided opportunities for potential exchanges'. The evidence is thus circumstantial. Since such opportunities might have arisen therefore they must have happened. In fact, the questions addressed to Jacob and George are themselves evidence that such things did happen to some extent; the fact that the answers that they provide are buried in the genre of *aporiai* suggests that this process was nothing unique to the West Syrian church. I am not, therefore, persuaded that the new Miaphysite leadership 'required an intellectual and spiritual formation which would differentiate them from the clergy of rival communions'.

What I doubt, however, is that if such interaction went on, that it can have been even to a small degree influenced by philosophy, or rather by Aristotelian logic, which is the only branch of philosophy with which we are really concerned. The fact that the *Life of Marutha*, which the author mentions in this connection, specifies that the instrument of leading people astray was 'hymnody and chanting'—in fact, nothing had changed in this regard since the days of Ephrem. I would therefore question whether the evidence really allows us to conclude that 'philosophical translations . . . blossom . . . because the situation 'on the ground' meant that . . . one had to be dialectically well-equipped'. There were many more important factors than dialectical skill in winning adherents to the cause, some of which we have noted—the appeal to tradition and the usual procedures of heresiography, the establishment of basic literacy-teaching in the villages with the rote-learning of hymns and chants, the powerful lure of the monasteries, to name but a few. We have seen that, as soon as philosophical learning drops beneath the very highest levels of sophistication, it becomes a rhetorical game, an exercise in 'name-dropping' and that this is true equally in the Hellenophone as in the Syriophone environments.

Further research is certainly required to examine the question of whether the West Syrian (Miaphysite) leadership developed a curriculum in higher education specifically with an aim to strengthening confessional boundaries. Such evidence may be forthcoming from some of Jacob's material, and as mentioned above his *Encheiridion* may prove useful in this connection; George's prefaces to his commentaries, however, locate him firmly within Late Antique scholaticism and not as a disputant seeking to prove Christological formulae with the instrument of logic.

Tannous is quite right to suggest that identity formation (as an experiment by the authorities, whatever it may have meant on the ground) was bound up with 'what you read' and, in his final paragraph, he makes the point effectively that while Bar 'Idta read Nestorius and Jacob read Philoxenus, both read Basil. But we could easily replace Basil with Aristotle.

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You Are What You Read

Qenneshre and the Miaphysite Church in the Seventh Century

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My aim in this chapter is to look at the relationship between three phenomena that characterise the Late Antique and early medieval Middle East: its sectarianisation,[1] the withering away of certain traditional genres of Greek literature that are seen as one of the most notable characteristics of the so-called Byzantine 'Dark Ages', and the translation of a large amount of material from Greek into Syriac. I will contend that, so far as Middle Eastern Christians are concerned, these three phenomena are bound up with one another. My argument will be a simple one: it was the conflicts generated as the Christians of the Middle East slowly separated themselves into distinct churches that fuelled the translation and re-translation of Greek texts and promoted the flourishing of Syriac literature; ultimately, I will attempt to make an argument about education among the Miaphysites in the seventh century.

My eventual destination is a monastery called Qenneshre, located across the Euphrates River from the town of Jirbās, very close to the modern Syrian-Turkish border. Before we arrive at Qenneshre, however, I want to try to get a sense for the religious landscape in the seventh and early eighth century.

1. Michael Morony has noted that one of the most important transformations in Middle Eastern society between the fourth and ninth centuries was the shift from a society in which personal identity was a matter of 'language, occupation, or geographical location' to one in which religion was the most important aspect of identity. For Morony, the shift to a 'society composed of religious communities' 'is fundamental to the formation of Islamic society and serves as the single most important distinction between Muslim and Hellenistic society'. See his *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 2nd ed. (Piscataway NJ, 2005), 277. In his 'History and Identity in the Syrian Churches', in J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and T. M. van Lint (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam* (Leuven, 2005), 1, Morony says, 'The emergence of separate sectarian group identities among Christians in the Middle East was an historical process that lasted from the fifth century to about the seventh or eighth centuries, but the memory of that process was a powerful factor in the preservation of sectarian group identities'.

I will look at the evidence for the state of inter-Christian relations that can be found in some sources that have been scarcely used by scholars studying the seventh and early eighth centuries, most importantly the canons of Jacob of Edessa (d. 708). I will rely especially on Jacob's replies to dozens of questions asked him by the priest Addai.[2] If we assume that these canons were motivated by real-life situations which he was aware of, through personal experience or through reports, we have a remarkable source for seeing what was happening, on the ground, in terms of how Miaphysite Christians in Syria were interacting with and living alongside both with other non-Miaphysite Christians and also with non-Christians. These reported actions help us get beyond the traditional clerical perspectives embodied in most of our written sources; through them we can see, implicitly, the views of other seventh- and eighth-century people whose attitudes might otherwise be lost. Viewed from the perspective of Jacob's canons and other sources, the situation outside the world of rarefied theological dispute was messy and chaotic. The implications of differing on the finer points of Christology do not seem to have sunk in with certain segments of the Christian population.

To begin, it seems as if Miaphysite and Chalcedonian clergy were often on friendly terms. If, Addai asked, it happens that a believing clergyman sits, out of necessity, at the table with a heretical clergyman, what should happen: should the Orthodox person say the blessing and the heretic eat, or vice versa?[3] Lest it be thought that such meal-time encounters might have occurred only in unavoidable situations, it seems that even Miaphysite and Chalcedonian monks were living together. In another question, Addai wants to know whether it is appropriate for an Orthodox monk and ascetic to have as a friend a heretical monk and ascetic who is not a family member? Can they live next to one another and share everything except the liturgy?[4] Jacob's response, that loving the Lord and keeping his commandments and being friends with a heretic were mutually exclusive propositions, cannot have been self-evident to everyone in his day.

Indeed, Addai had spoken about sharing everything but the Eucharist, but it seems that members of rival churches were sharing even this. In the early eighth-century Miaphysite *Life of Theodota of Amid* (d. AD 698), the protagonist finds an old man, 'from among the Persians', living in the monastery of Mar Abay, in Qeleth (near Dara), whom he immediately recognises as unbaptised,

2. Seventy-one of these were published by P. de Lagarde, *Reliquiæ iuris ecclesiastici antiquissimae* (Osnabrück, 1967), ומקם–ו,ם and T. J. Lamy, *Dissertatio de Syrorum fide et disciplina in re eucharistica* (Louvain, 1859), 98–171. MSS Harvard Syriac 93 and Mardin 310 contain two additional rulings by Jacob, in addition to several other canons of Jacob and answers to further questions by Addai. See R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It* (Princeton, 1997), 592–608.

3. Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 152, which contains misprints. See MS Mardin 310, fol. 203b, for a better Syriac version.

4. Lamy, *Dissertatio*,152, 154.

though the man had been living in the monastery for some twenty years. For this reason, Theodota orders his disciple to withhold the Eucharist from the old man, although he is eventually baptised and restored to communion.[5]

This old man was unbaptised, and those around him had been unaware of that fact; the people in his monastery would perhaps have acted differently had they known his status. There is, however, evidence that some Miaphysite monks were not surprised at having members of rival communities living among them. Earlier in the same *Life of Theodota*, the protagonist finds a man, a secret Nestorian, in the monastery of Mar Sergius the Broad, learning the Psalms. 'This man is a Nestorian', Theodota tells the Abbot, 'and you trample upon the law of God when you give him the Eucharist and seat him at the table of life'. But the Abbot and monks disregard his warning. The Nestorian was a carpenter, and they did not want to send such a useful person away. The Nestorian is eventually sent out from the monastery, but, to force the issue, it takes a demon dramatically possessing the heretic and boasting at his joy in spiritually damaging the monks of the monastery through intercommunion. For readers, the dangers of intercommunion could not have been more clear.[6]

The sharply polemical literature that exists between Miaphysites and Chalcedonians might suggest that the divisions between these two groups were clear, but it is not obvious that the strong disagreements about Christology were of equal importance to everyone, nor that they necessarily had obvious sociological consequences. We might suppose that these disagreements were significant only to those who had attained a high level of literacy and education, but even the importance of these disagreements and the seriousness with which the literate (including scribes) took them is called into question by Jacob's canons. Is it right, Addai asks Jacob, for an Orthodox monk to write out questions and answers that help the heretics against the Orthodox faith, in exchange for money or some other form of compensation? Such a person, Jacob responded, was a second Judas.[7]

If there was an apparent lack of concern among some Miaphysites about helping to propagate the theology of the Chalcedonians, there was also confusion as to whether a Miaphysite should abide by the canons of heretics. Is it appropriate, Addai asked, that we keep a heretical canon? No, Jacob responded, not even if it is justly and rightly stated.[8]

5. MS St Mark's Jerusalem 199, fol. 555b.

6. For the incident, see St Mark's Jerusalem 199, fols. 553a–553b.

7. Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 154.

8. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, ed. A. Vööbus, CSCO 367/SS 161 (Louvain, 1975), 259, and English trans. in A. Vööbus (trans.), *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, CSCO 368/SS 162 (Louvain, 1975), 236. But note that, in his thirteenth-century work on canon law, Bar Hebraeus cites the Council of Chalcedon as an authority. See, for example *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei*, ed. P. Bedjan (Paris, 1898), 77, 109, and his listing of Chalcedon as a source, 2.

Apparently, the switching of allegiances by individuals was causing confusion about jurisdiction and the applicability of canons and ecclesiastical decrees across competing communions. How should we treat a heretic, asks John, the Stylite of Litarb, who has been excommunicated by his superior for his sin and now wants to be received with us?[9] An Orthodox man, John reports to Jacob, has been excommunicated by a heretical bishop. What should he do?[10]

Switching from one confession to another was a process that had to be handled properly. One of the questions taken up by the Miaphysite bishop George of the Arabs (d. AD 724) in his fourth letter concerns a Miaphysite priest who gave absolution to a Chalcedonian deacon for that deacon's heresy. If the Chalcedonian was near death and wanted absolution for his heresy, it was permissible for the priest to grant it without permission from a bishop or *chorepiscopos*. But if the Chalcedonian is healthy and able to travel, neither a priest nor a stylite nor a recluse has permission to grant the heretic forgiveness for his heresy.[11]

Confessional loyalties could vary, even within a family, from one generation to another. Addai wanted to know if it was lawful for Orthodox children to make memorials and celebrate Eucharists for their parents who were heretics and had died in heresy. What if, he continued, the parents were heretics, but gave their son to the Orthodox to become a monk? Here we have an indication that putative sectarian boundaries did not impede the donation of children to monasteries. Jacob's answer was nuanced: if the parents had been supporters and proponents of the heresy, no Eucharists or memorials should be celebrated. If, however, they had been among the 'simple people' and had held to the heresy out of a 'certain custom' and 'not out of wickedness', then the question of whether such memorial services might be celebrated in their honour was left to the judgement of the children.[12]

Children and parents might have opposing Christological loyalties; so, too, might servants and masters. John, the Stylite of Litarb, another of Jacob's correspondents, asked him about the case of a person who had been the servant of a heretic. Though the servant suffered afflictions from his heretical master because of his beliefs, he never denied them. What benefit would such a person have?[13]

9. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, ed. 244, trans. 224.

10. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, ed. 245, trans. 225.

11. MS BL Add. 12,154, fols. 253a–254a. Note also George's comments about giving absolution to a deacon so that he can enter a sanctuary: this can only be done by a bishop, not even by a *chorepiscopos/periodeute*. Such an absolution, George holds, is especially bad if it is given to a heretical deacon by someone other than a bishop. See BL Add. 12,154, fols. 253b–254a.

12. The canon is in MS Mardin 310, fols. 212b–213b, and seems to be among the things that Jacob tells Addai he will inform him about, even though he has not asked (see Jacob's comments on fols. 207b–208a), though the structure of the canon seems also to be in question-and-answer format. MS Harvard 93, fols. 25a–26a contains a longer version of the same canon but is in the form of a question from Addai and an answer from Jacob. Bedjan, *Nomocanon*, 73–4, contains a shorter version of this canon.

13. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, ed. 243, trans. 223.

In such a world, in which ecclesiastical affiliations are still in flux, it is not hard to imagine that there might be what might be called confessional code-switching, whereby a person claimed allegiance to one group or another depending on the circumstances he found himself in.[14] One thing is clear: people were moving back and forth between various church groups, and not only in rural areas and far from the centres of theological power. There was confessional shape-shifting going on under the noses and in the company of the most elite theological elements of society. Nearing the end of his life, Theodota of Amid encounters a confessional code-switcher near the famous monastery of Qenneshre, the intellectual heart of the Syriac-speaking Miaphysite movement in the seventh century. A foreigner from Beth Garmai, this person was among the people from the monastery who came out to meet Theodota. Though the *Life* notes that this old man was honoured by the monks of Qenneshre and by no less than the Miaphysite patriarch Julian as a holy man, Theodota saw through his projected identity and publicly called him out as not being a true believer. Though some of the monks doubted Theodota's accusations, the suspect eventually came clean: he was baptised a Nestorian and, going deaf, he had agreed to be circumcised if a Jewish doctor would treat his ear problems. Theodota was right, yet again. The last we see this old man, he is leaving Qenneshre, following the prescriptions Theodota has imposed upon him.[15] Baptised Nestorian, a convert to Judaism, and living among the spiritual elites and highest leadership of the Miaphysite church, his confessional passport had acquired a number of stamps in the course of his life.

The *Life of Theodota* gives us another report of a confessional code-switcher. Earlier in the story, Theodota had received word of a *faux* holy man travelling around the region of the Arsanias River, claiming to be Theodota himself. He would mix with the heretics and act like one, the text tells us, and he would mix with the Orthodox and act like one of them. The *Life* suggests that the real motivation of this pseudo-Theodota was the large amount of gold he was amassing. The false holy man is eventually confronted by the real Theodota, who exposes his fraud. Demons possess him, and he confesses publicly his true theological colours. 'I am a Nestorian', he wails before Theodota, 'I do not agree with the Orthodox nor with the Chalcedonians'. Theodota drives out the demons, and the man becomes properly Orthodox.[16] Now Miaphysite, now Chalcedonian, now Nestorian: confessional shape-shifting was easy, common, and perhaps even lucrative in this environment.

14. I am influenced here by Peter Burke's comments on 'occasionalism' in his *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge MA, 2004), 94–6, and also by conversations with Richard Payne.

15. MS St Mark's Jerusalem, 199, fols. 559a–559b.

16. St Mark's Jerusalem 199, fol. 554b.

This fluidity in personal identities was mirrored by a fluidity in the ownership of real estate and church property: churches and church vessels were changing hands between rival groups, and this raised questions that confronted Jacob in his canons. What should be done, Addai asks, to a priest who takes an altar and its vessels from Chalcedonians and then gives them back?[17] John the Stylite reported to Jacob an instance of zealous Miaphysites seizing a church from heretics. Before a bishop was able to pray in it, they had held a liturgy there and celebrated the Eucharist. There was also the opposite situation: a church of the Miaphysites seized by the heretics and then retaken by the Orthodox and used for a service before a bishop could say the appropriate prayers. What did Jacob make of such cases?[18] Mass conversions from one confession to another were also a possibility. If an entire village of heretics returns to the true faith, John tells Jacob, what should we now do with their mysteries?[19]

Aiding and abetting putative rivals was likewise not a problem for some. In the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives (d. AD 734), we have the curious case of groups that were supposed to be enemies actually helping one another out when it came to building churches. Simeon's attempts to build a church outside of Nisibis are hampered by Nestorian priests. Their tactic? Forbidding Nestorians from working on the building of the church, with or without pay. For at least some 'Nestorians' there seems to have been nothing objectionable in helping to build a church to be used by Miaphysites.[20] This is the brick-and-mortar equivalent of Miaphysite scribes writing out theological polemics for their Christian rivals.

There were other areas of encounter between Miaphysites and Chalcedonians. What if a heretical ruler commands an Orthodox priest to eat with him and, while they are eating, uses threats of injury to force the priest to burn incense and bless and anoint him—if the priest does so, is he guilty?[21]

Given that people were willing to subordinate Chalcedon and precise Christological doctrines to other concerns in their self-presentation and behaviour, it should come as no surprise that, at the level of the sacraments and church ritual, there seems to have been sharing and overlap between people supposed to be holding opposing Christologies: Addai's questions reflect a milieu in which Miaphysite priests were performing rites for Christians who, strictly speaking, belonged to heretical rival churches. This was, in part, the case because neither the Chalcedonians nor the Miaphysites were able to supply clergy to all of the people who agreed with them doctrinally. Is it right, Addai asked Jacob, for us to be escorts in the funeral processions of heretics and to

17. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, ed. 259, trans. 236.
18. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, ed. 244, trans. 224.
19. *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition I*, ed. 243–4, trans. 224.
20. MS Mardin 259, fols. 112b–113a.
21. Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 154, 156.

bury them? According to Jacob, if the deceased person is in a city or a village where there are clerics who agree with his doctrine, and the deceased had not asked for an Orthodox (i.e., Miaphysite) burial, then he should not receive one. But if there are no heretical clergy nearby, then Miaphysite clergy should bury him, regardless of whether he requested such a burial.[22] We see this problem in personnel in Theodota's *Life*, when he comes across a boy in a village who is so ill that the villagers have already dug his grave. They beg Theodota to stay because they had no priest to escort the boy's funeral procession.[23] Concern about the doctrinal purity of priests was a luxury available only to those who had an abundance of clergy from which to choose.

Addai also wanted to know from Jacob whether it was appropriate for an Orthodox clergyman or monk to take part, with lay people, in the funeral procession of a 'heretical Chalcedonian', though abstaining from chanting while processing. And was it right for the Miaphysites to allow Chalcedonian clerics to take part in Orthodox funeral processions, also while refraining from chanting?[24]

What if, Addai asked, an Orthodox clergyman found himself in the company of Chalcedonians who had no priest and who wanted him to administer their own Eucharist to them? If the Orthodox priest did not enter the altar of the heretical Chalcedonians and if he did not himself communicate, would this be acceptable?[25] George, Bishop of the Arabs, Jacob's contemporary and friend, has left us a canon stipulating that a priest or a deacon who gives the Eucharist to heretics is to be deposed,[26] and we have already seen examples from the *Life of Theodota* of clergy giving, knowingly and unknowingly, the mysteries to people whom they should have excluded. The *Life of Marutha*, the Miaphysite metropolitan of Takrit (d. AD 649), reports that, during the time of the metropolitan Samuel (AD 614–24), through negligence or through active permission, the Eucharist was being given to Miaphysite believers and Nestorian laymen alike at the church of Gabriel, the chief physician, and at the monastery of Shīrīn.[27] Writing in perhaps 684,[28] Miaphysite Patriarch Athanasius of Balad

22. Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 158, 160, which contains typographic errors. MS Mardin 310, fols. 204b–205a, is a better text. For this passage, cf. also the Latin trans. of Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 159, 161. *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei*, 70, contains a shortened version of this canon.

23. MS St Mark's Jerusalem 199, fol. 554a.

24. Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 160, 162. MS Mardin 310, fol. 205a, is free from Lamy's typographic errors. *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei*, 70, contains a shortened version of this canon.

25. Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 162.

26. Bedjan, *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei* (Paris, 1898), 42.

27. See *Histoires d'Ahoudemmeh et de Marouta métropolitains Jacobites de Tagrit et de l'orient (VI^e^ et VII^e^) siècles*, ed. and trans. F. Nau, PO 3 (Paris, 1909), 76. For Samuel's dates, see ibid., 54; cf. Morony, *Iraq*, 377

28. For this date, see the marginal note in MS Mardin 310, fol. 183b. Also, cf. A. Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonsessammlungen: Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde I. Westsyrische Originalurkunden 1* (Louvain, 1975), 201.

(d. AD 686) condemned Orthodox priests who knowingly and willingly baptised Nestorians, Julianists, and other heretics and who gave them the Eucharist.[29] Whatever the boundaries certain leaders might have preferred to have established between people holding opposing Christological views, they were not clear when it came to real life and the administration of the most important ritual and sacramental acts in the Christian faith. Life was bigger than ideology.

This, then, is the religious landscape we see through the lens of these Syriac sources. The lives of members of rival Christian communities are closely intertwined, as are the lives of their clergy. Miaphysite priests give the Eucharist to Nestorians, Julianists, and other heretics, presumably Chalcedonians. Miaphysite priests fill in and administer the Eucharist of the Chalcedonians to Chalcedonians when there are no Chalcedonian priests to be found. Miaphysite monasteries knowingly host heretics and give them communion. Even the Miaphysite patriarch and monks of the most important monastery in the Miaphysite church admire a holy man who is really a crypto-Nestorian-turned-Jew. Miaphysites lead funeral processions for Chalcedonians and bury them. Chalcedonians seize Miaphysite church buildings, and Miaphysites seize Chalcedonian church buildings; the buildings might change hands more than once. Liturgical vessels go back and forth between the communities. Nestorians help build Miaphysite churches. Chalcedonian and Miaphysite ascetics live together. Chalcedonians might have Miaphysite servants. Chalcedonian parents donate their children to Miaphysite monasteries, and their children hold Miaphysite memorial services for them upon their deaths. Little seems to have been out of bounds: in a situation like this, what exactly was the social use of labels such as 'Orthodox' and 'heretic', 'Chalcedonian', and 'Nestorian'? As a predictor of patterns of social behaviour, interaction, and association, it must not have been very reliable. Indeed, John of Litarb had written Jacob a letter full of canonical questions, and Jacob had taken his time in responding. One of his reasons was a sense of futility in the endeavour: 'I say', he wrote to John, 'that, at this point, there is no necessity at all, not even for one canon, since no one observes the canons'.[30] During his first stint as bishop of Edessa, lasting four years, Jacob is reported to have forbidden several priests from performing the liturgy and expelled many other people from the church for their lawlessness, before finally giving up in the face of widespread disregard for the

29. Syriac text and French trans. in F. Nau, 'Littérature canonique syriaque inédite', *Revue de l'orient chrétien* 14 (1909), 130, but I take my Syriac text from Mardin 310, fols. 184b–185a, an eighth-century manuscript and the oldest witness to the text (see Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen: Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde I*, 200–1), which differs slightly from Nau's printed text.

30. K. E. Rignell, *A Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite of Litarb* (Lund, 1979), Syriac text, 46. My translation, but see Rignell's English trans. in ibid., 47.

canons.[31] Jacob is said to have burned his book of canon law for a reason. He was exasperated.

There are two related suggestions I would like to make, based on the evidence of interaction between elements of society in Umayyad northern Mesopotamia we have just seen. The first is the issue of boundaries. Jacob's canons governing Miaphysite interaction with other types of Christians can be seen as acts of border policing: he was trying to make sure that the integrity of the boundaries separating his community from others remained safe and intact. Alternatively, however, they can be viewed as attempts at actual border drawing. No one observes the canons, Jacob lamented—but had these canons ever been observed? Were these communities ever really separate in the first place?

By the late seventh century, there were definitely monasteries and at least some groups of people that strongly advocated any number of Christological positions—Monothelete Chalcedonian, Dyothelete Chalcedonian, Miaphysite, Julianist, Nestorian, and perhaps others. But the wide-ranging violations of the boundaries that were supposed to separate these communities suggest that for some Christians, perhaps many, other considerations were more important in determining the shape of their lives than the subtler points of Christological doctrine. Furthermore, for Christians living in places with few or no clergy and worrying about receiving the mysteries, having a child baptised, or making sure a loved one received a Christian burial, selecting a priest with the proper doctrinal orientation might not have been an option. Beggars could not be choosers.

The evidence I have presented suggests that, rather than being fully formed and distinct communities, these different confessional movements were still very much trying to separate themselves from one another—not doctrinally but rather sociologically—as late as the Umayyad period. The problem was that life kept getting in the way.

My second suggestion relates to this first. The intertwined and overlapping nature of the lives of Christians of one confessional faction with Christians of another confessional faction meant that there were many opportunities in many different settings for friction to suddenly arise between people who, perhaps notionally at least, adhered to different positions, even if it did not have a discernible effect on their interactions with other people on a day-to-day basis. Tectonic plates that rub against one another long enough will eventually produce earthquakes. Rival confessional groups rubbing up against one another produced earthquakes of a different kind. There might be violence, as happened after Athanasius Gamolo, the Miaphysite patriarch refused to give Heraclius communion at Mabbug at some point in late 629 or the early 630s. The

31. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche, 1166–1199* (Paris, 1899–1910), 4:445 = 2:417–72 (French trans.).

emperor became enraged and unleashed a persecution upon them, in the course of which, Michael the Syrian reports, most of the Miaphysites' churches and monasteries were seized by opposing groups.[32]

But violence was not the only form the heat from the friction between groups might take. Another form was disputations. The so-called *Maronite Chronicle*, for example, reports that two Miaphysite bishops came to Damascus in June of 659 and held a dispute on faith with representatives of the Maronites in the presence of Muʿāwiya, the Maronites are supposed to have bested the Miaphysites.[33] The *Trophies of Damascus* has a sizeable crowd of 'Jews, Greeks, Samaritans, heretics, and Christians' gatherin a public place to watch a debate between Jews and Christians; we learn later that there were Saracens present as well.[34] At the religious discussion that took place between a Muslim amīr and the Miaphysite Patriarch John, which may or may not have occurred in the 639 or 644, there were present Muslim notables, urban notables, Christian Arab notables, Chalcedonian leaders and at least one Jew.[35]

Such formal disputes between members of rival Christian confessions or members of different religious communities tend to attract the attention of scholars in part because they were the sort of things that people left records of, but formal disputes between notables of different groups were not the only game in town. Disputes or discussions between heavy-weight members of different groups were no more the only doctrinal contests going on than the Premiership is the only football that is played in the U.K. or the Major Leagues are the only baseball played in the US. Bertrand Russell and Frederick Copelston's famous debate about the existence of God was only a more high-octane version of an untold number of similar debates and discussions that took place in lunchrooms, at water coolers, and in pubs and other places all throughout the twentieth century which were never published in books or placed on undergraduate syllabi. But they happened nevertheless. Similarly, the early-medieval Near East of Jacob's day must have witnessed countless small-time religious

32. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, 4:410 = 2:412 (French trans.).

33. *Chronica Minora II*, ed. E. W. Brooks, CSCO: SS, ser. 3, vol. 4 (Paris, 1904), 70. For an English trans., see A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993), 30.

34. See *Les trophées de Damas: Controverse judéo-chrétienne du VII^e siècle*, ed. and trans. G. Bardy (Paris, 1927), 215. On the dating of the *Trophies* c. 680, see ibid., 176–7. Also cf. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 85–6, who dates it to the middle to late seventh century.

35. F. Nau, 'Un colloque du patriarche Jean avec l'émir des Agaréens', *Journal Asiatique* 11 (1915), 251–2 (Syriac), 260–2 (French trans.). For a date of AD 639, see See Nau, 'Un Colloque', 227; for 644, see H. Lammens, 'A propos d'un colloque entre le patriarche Jacobite Jean 1^er^ et 'Amr ibn al-'Aṣi', *Journal Asiatique* 11 (1919), 98. For this text as a fictional construct from the early eighth century, see G. J. Reinink, 'The Beginnings of Syriac Apologetic Literature in Response to Islam', *Oriens Christianus* 77 (1993), 171–87. Though against Reinink, see more recently, H. Suermann, 'The Old Testament and the Jews in the dialogue between the Jacobite Patriarch John I and 'Umayr ibn Saʿd al-Anṣārī', 131–41, in Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (ed.), *Eastern Crossroads: Essays on Medieval Christian Legacy* (Piscataway NJ, 2007).

discussions and disagreements that are now lost to us. The unseen pillars supporting the creation of dispute texts such as the *Trophies of Damascus* and the dialogue between the Muslim amīr and the Patriarch John were the interest of an audience that had perhaps taken part in their own, much less dramatic debates and discussions with friends, acquaintances, and associates with whom they differed in religious belief.

In other words, there must have been a whole layer, now almost entirely lost, of lower-level arguments, disputes, debates, and doctrinal wrangling going on. All the points of overlap that I have spelled out above provided opportunities for potential exchanges of a religious or confessional nature. They were settings in which people who ascribed, at least notionally, to conflicting creeds might assert some aspect of that creedal identity vis-à-vis a person from whom they differed doctrinally.

An upshot of the diversity of Christian confessional stances and the incomplete ecclesiastical and communal separation that existed on the ground was an intense competition between rival factions for followers among the 'simple people' and others who were still very much 'up for grabs' in terms of their confessional allegiance. Small-time theological debates are one manifestation of this competition between groups. Another can be seen in the *Life of Marutha*, which reports that, in the late sixth century, Nestorians who wished to 'steal the simple people over to their error' were diligently establishing schools in every village and spreading their chanting and hymnody in the region of Beth Nehūdrā around Nineveh. This prompted a counter-movement by zealous Miaphysites to establish their own schools in the same region.[36]

This establishment of rival Nestorian and Miaphysite schools took place decades after the Chalcedonians carried out, in the 520s and 530s, several campaigns to purge monasteries in the regions of Antioch, Euphratensia, Osrhoene, and Mesopotamia of their Miaphysite monks.[37] Among the purged monasteries was that of St Thomas, at Seleucia-Pieria, near Antioch. In about 530, the abbot of the monastery, a man named John bar Aphtonia, led a group of Miaphysite monks eastwards and established a new monastery called Qenneshre on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, across from the town of Europos (the modern Jirbās). We have some evidence that the monastery of St Thomas had been a centre of Greek education for Syriac-speaking monks and that Qenneshre continued this tradition. John bar Aphtonia himself knew Greek and composed works in Greek. And we have evidence that, within decades of

36. *Histoires d'Ahoudemmeh et de Marouta métropolitains Jacobites de Tagrit et de l'orient (VI^e^ et VII^e^) siècles)*, ed. and trans. F. Nau, PO 3 (Paris, 1909), 65–6; cf. Morony, *Iraq*, 374–5.

37. For the purge of AD 525–531, see *The Syriac Chronicle Known As That of Zachariah of Mitylene*, ed. and trans. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks (London, 1899), 209–12. In general, see V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, (Oxford, 2008), 106–44.

Qenneshre's founding, it had already become a place where education in the Greek language was being carried out and which was a source of bishops; it was also apparently a scenic destination for visitors.

By the late sixth century, Qenneshre's importance becomes more conspicuous in our sources. In the 117 years between the consecration of Julian I as patriarch of Antioch in 591 and the death of the patriarch Julian II in 708, there were seven Syrian Orthodox patriarchs of Antioch, five of whom were from the monastery of Qenneshre or who had been trained there in their youth. In the 254 years between Julian I and Dionysius of Tell Maḥre, approximately 136 of those years saw patriarchs of Antioch that hailed from Qenneshre.[38]

It is significant that Bar Hebraeus notes that many of these patriarchs learned Greek while at Qenneshre; this place was synonymous with Greek education and was a training ground for almost all of the major Syrian Orthodox bishop-scholars of the seventh and eighth centuries: Thomas of Harkel,[39] Paul of Edessa,[40] Severus Sebokht,[41] Athanasius of Balad,[42] Jacob of Edessa,[43] and

38. Julian I (591–c. 596), Athanasius I, the Camel Driver (c. 596–631), Theodore (649–667), Athanasius II, of Balad (684–687), and Julian II, the Roman (688–708). Dionysius of Tell Maḥre was patriarch from 818 to 845. For this, see E. Barsoum, 'Sīrat al-qiddīs Yūḥannā ibn Aftūnīyyā', *al-Majalla al-Baṭrakiyya al-Suryāniyya* 4/9 (1937), 271. W. Hage, *Die syrisch-jacobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit. Nach orientalischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden, 1966) (table insert), has a good list of the patriarchs of the West Syrian church in the seventh and eighth centuries.

39. See Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, I, col. 267.

40. A good circumstantial case can be made for associating Paul with Qenneshre. MS BL Add. 17,134, quite possibly written in the hand of Jacob of Edessa himself and dated AD 675, contains a note stating that the *Gloria in excelsis* of Athanasius of Alexandria was translated by Paul, according to the tradition of Qenneshre (see W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1870), 1:336; cf. the note in MS Bodleian (Poc.) 10, in R. Payne Smith, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Bodleianae* (Oxford, 1864), col. 64. The *Chronicle to 724*, ed. E. W. Brooks, *Chronica Minora II* (Paris, 1904), 147, English trans. in A. Palmer, S. P. Brock, and R. Hoyland, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993), 18, notes that in 623 the Slavs invaded Crete and other islands, and some twenty monks from Qenneshre were killed. We know also that Paul was on Cyprus in 624 (see MS BL Add. 12,153, fol. 1b, in W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1871), 2:423, in flight from the Persians (as reported by Jacob of Edessa, in a note in BL Add. 17,134; see Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1:336). See also this entire note and its translation in E. W. Brooks (ed. and trans.), *The Hymns of Severus of Antioch, and Others in the Syriac Version of Paul of Edessa As Revised by James of Edessa* (Paris, 1911), 801–2. For many of these points and for the connection between Paul of Edessa and Qenneshre, see S. P. Brock, *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Scholia* (Cambridge, 1971), 29, and A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn, 1922), 190.

41. Severus was 'Bishop of Qenneshrin' (cf., e.g., Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, I, col. 275); this may refer to the city of Chalcis or the monastery of Qenneshre (though I am unaware of any other mention of a bishop over the monastery). Nevertheless, we know also that Severus Sebokht was a teacher of Athanasius of Balad, who is said to have studied Greek at Qenneshre in his youth (see Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, I, col. 287) cf. also Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 246, esp. n.5.

42. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, I, col. 287.

43. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, I, col. 290.

George, Bishop of the Arabs[44] are among the luminaries whom we know or strongly suspect studied there.

It was scholars trained at Qenneshre who were responsible for much of the Syriac-language intellectual activity that characterised the seventh century, especially in the Miaphysite church, and which contrasts so sharply with the story of Greek in the seventh century. My efforts so far have been aimed at trying to understand why Syriac flourished in the seventh century and why there should have been such a flurry of translations and re-translations at that time.

A partial answer to this question lies in the image of the religious landscape of Umayyad society that I have tried to sketched out here. The twin factors of diversity and competition—diversity of Christian confessional factions and the intense competition between them for adherents created an environment that encouraged the need to marginally differentiate and separate one group from another as they tried to woo 'the simple people' that Jacob referred to. The drive to win converts, to protect one's 'turf', and to defend one's position in such a fluid and unstable environment was one of the things fuelling the production of texts. Philosophical translations and literature in Syriac blossom in the seventh century, because the situation on the ground meant that, if one was going to defend and promote one's position ably amid the low-level inter-confessional sniping, one had to be dialectically well equipped.[45]

Strategies for distinguishing one Christian group from another can take on a number of different forms: doctrinal, liturgical, creedal, and other. An inescapable reality, however, was that the creation of a separate church—in the sociological sense, in the real physical world, and not just the doctrinal sense on

44. K. McVey, *George Bishop of the Arabs: A Homily on Blessed Mar Severus, Patriarch of Antioch* (Louvain, 1993), xxii–xxvii, makes a strong circumstantial case that George spent time at Qenneshre. See also my comments in 'Between Christology and *Kalām*? The Life and Letters of George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes', in G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* (Piscataway NJ, 2008), 674–7.

45. The revisionist points about the importance of philosophical texts in theological dispute made by Dan King in this volume are well made and well taken and should not be seen necessarily as conflicting with what I say here. King's chapter covers a wider time span than mine, from the sixth century to the ʿAbbāsid period. and focuses on both East and West Syrian authors. The argument of this paper is less concerned with philosophical study specifically, which is King's focus, than with the development more generally of a curriculum of study that includes both philosophical and theological works in a more limited time and place: the ideas and conclusions in the present chapter are the result of the close examination of West Syrian intellectuals in the seventh and early eighth centuries, especially those associated with the monastery of Qenneshre. It is perhaps no coincidence that the two authors I have studied most closely—George of the Arabs and Jacob of Edessa—are two authors whom King suggests may actually have used philosophy at some level to inform their theological reasoning and polemic. The tradition of Syriac-language philosophical study in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages lasted for hundreds of years, and it should be expected that the reasons for undertaking such study changed as cultural, political, and religious contexts changed.

paper—required both institutions and manpower. It required institutions for training manpower. The question is: How could one win hearts and minds in the seventh century and then keep them won?

Jacob had no state to enforce his vision of Christian orthodoxy. What he did have was words: he could call you bad names—'Jew',[46] 'pagan',[47] 'heretic',[48] 'strangers to the Church',[49] 'Arab'[50]—if you deviated from his norm and ideal. More important, he also had the Mysteries. He could punish you ecclesiastically, most powerfully, by cutting you off from the Eucharist, something he frequently prescribes as a course of action in his canons.[51] But exclusion from the sacraments required priests who would agree with his doctrinal views and who would do the excluding.

Without a clergy possessed of a distinctly Miaphysite identity and consciousness, therefore, there could never be any hope for a distinct Miaphysite church. The creation of such a distinct Miaphysite leadership and clergy therefore required an intellectual and spiritual formation that would differentiate them from the clergy of rival communions. What was needed was a distinct curriculum of study.

What can we say about education at this time? It seems that all young Christian boys were taught at least some basic reading and writing and the study of the scriptures by a teacher in the village church. Before adolescence, there was an educational fork in the road: those who were to go on to become priests or monks would continue their studies in a monastery, while those who did not have clerical futures would stop. This, at least, is the pattern set out in the Miaphysite *Life of Simeon of the Olives*. Simeon's father, we are told, brought him to the teacher in their village church when he was a young boy, and Simeon learned letters and began to study the Bible closely. At the age of ten, his father took him to the monastery of Beth Simon of Qartmin. There was a rule, Simeon's *Life* notes, that held for the region of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn: 'In the case of each male child that is born in all the region around the monastery, from the age of ten years and above, the child is brought by his parents so that he can learn in the school of the holy monastery. Afterwards, if he is willing, he will become a monk or a priest in the world'.[52]

Writing in his *Nomocanon* in the thirteenth century, Bar Hebraeus gives us details about Miaphysite education that suggest that a similar system was in

46. Cf., e.g., MS Mardin 310, fol. 210a, in which he criticises Christians following 'Jewish observances'. See also, e.g., Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa*, 3.

47. See MS Mardin 310, fol. 208b, and Mardin 310 fol., 212a.

48. See Mardin 310, fol. 203a. (those who baptise the *nāqūshā* (wooden boards which were beaten to signal prayer times, cf. the *semantra* of Greek monasteries) are heretics and strangers to the church).

49. See Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 146.

50. See Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa*, 3–4, on the Armenians.

51. See, e.g., Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 108, 136, 142, 148; Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa*, 21; MS Mardin 310, fol. 202b.

52. Mardin 259, fol. 105a.

place then as well. Bar Hebraeus stipulated that bishops should, 'before everything', appoint teachers everywhere where there were none. Teachers were supposed to write down names of children who were suitable for instruction and order their parents to enter them into school, by compulsion if necessary. The education of poor students was to be supported by the church. If the church itself was poor, its steward was to take a collection for the students each Sunday. The teacher himself was to be paid partly by the church and partly by the parents of the students.

According to Bar Hebraeus, students were first supposed to study the Psalms of David, next the New Testament, and then the Old Testament. Then the Doctors of the Church were to be studied and then the commentators. Students who were not going to become priests were to study the Psalms first and then focus on reading the yearly lectionary cycle and learning how to chant it with skill. Students who did not have suitable voices were not to learn any chanting, apart from the simple service.[53]

This sort of basic education in the Psalms and the Bible would not necessarily differentiate the Miaphysite church from its rivals, for it does not seem to have been unique to the Miaphysites. The *History of Rabban Hormizd*, a Nestorian born in the late sixth or early seventh century, reports that his parents took him to a school when he was twelve years old; he remained at the school for six years, at the end of which he had memorised the Psalms and New Testament. He later went on to become a monk.[54] The fact that Nestorian and Miaphysite (and presumably Chalcedonian) village priests and monks had similar formations in the Psalms and New Testament and the liturgy—and perhaps not much else—might be one reason they found it easy to cross over and do work for the other side.

But some members of the clergy would receive more than the basic education. In a somewhat cryptic passage, the *Life* of Simeon of the Olives tells us that 'the youth entered school and became the head of the school on account of his wisdom and knowledge. When he had finished the measure (*τάξις*) of his instruction in three schools, he was trained until he became the chief chanter'.[55] Simeon seems to have studied in at least three different institutions or, perhaps, with three different teachers. The Nestorians, too, had multiple schools. The *History of Rabban Bar ʿIdta* (c. AD 509–612), reports that his sister first placed him in a school where he learned the Psalms, chanting, and the art of copying books and writing. She then took him to another school, in a monastery, where he studied the Bible and Biblical commentaries. Alone in his room, he would

53. Bedjan, *Nomocanon*, 107.

54. See *The Histories of Rabban Hôrmîzd the Persian and Rabban bar ʿIdtâ*, ed. and trans. E. Wallace-Budge (London, 1902), 14. See p. xii for the approximate date of his birth.

55. MS Mardin 259, fols. 105b–106a.

read one book a week. He read and memorised the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the works of Aba Isaiah, Mark the Monk, Evagrius, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Palladius, the 'Sayings of the Fathers', and the *Book of Heraclides* of Nestorius, which had, he tells us, recently been translated into Syriac from Greek.[56] Here we have a list of books that resembles a curriculum, or at least gives us insight into what some Nestorians were reading in the sixth century.

We have some indications also of what the Miaphysite canon of authorities might have been at this time. In the late seventh or early eighth century, Jacob of Edessa would write to John of Litarb that he could not respond to a question he had been asked because he did not have the books with him that contained the answer. To answer properly, he said he would need the commentaries of select God-bearing Doctors such as Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John (Chrysostom), Cyril, Severus, Ephrem, Philoxenus, and Jacob (of Sarugh).[57]

It is here, at the higher level of education, that the differences between rival groups became more pronounced. As with rudimentary education, our fullest testimony to a Miaphysite syllabus comes much later, from Bar Hebraeus, in his thirteenth-century *Nomocanon*. He offers two lists of the books that are read in the holy church: one of Christian authors, the other of pagan ones. The Christian authors are Ps.-Dionysius, Gregory Nazianzen, Severus of Antioch, Ephrem, Jacob of Sarugh, Isaac of Antioch, Cyril, Theodotus, and Erechthius of Antioch in Pisidia. He also includes 'the stories of the Fathers and Teachers and Martyrs', the *Paradise* of Palladius, the *Hexameron* of Basil, texts from Jacob of Edessa, and the commentaries of Ephrem, John Chrysostom, Moshe bar Kepha, and Dionysius (Jacob) bar Salibi.

Bar Hebraeus's second list consists of the books that are to be read from the teachings of the 'outsiders' (i.e., pagans). These are the book of Anton of Takrit on Aristotle, Aristotle's *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Analytica*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. Also to be read are the *Poetics*, the *Rhetoric*, and what he calls Aristotle's 'mathematical' treatises, which Assemani, at least, took to mean the *Meteorology*. Some parts of the *Physics*, which he calls the *Natural Hearing*, and the *Metaphyics* are to be read as well.[58]

This is just a list of names, perhaps even a confusing one. But something interesting happens if one removes all the names of authors who wrote in Syriac

56. See Budge, *The Histories*, 170–6. The text does not refer explicitly to Palladius's *Paradise of the Fathers*, or the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, but only to the *Book of Histories*, which Budge, 175 n.5, suggests are these two works. For the dates of Rabban bar 'Idta's life, see ibid., xxxiii. For this story as illustrative of the system of education, cf. F. Nau, 'L'araméen chrétien (syriaque): Les traductions faites du grec en syriaque au VII^{e} siècle', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 99 (1929), 244–5.

57. MS BL Add. 12,172, fols. 100a–100b. Cf. W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1871), 2:599.

58. See *Nomocanon*, 106.

and considers only the Greek authors. Several of these books were either translated for the first time or were re-translated again in the seventh century. The works of (Ps.-)Dionysius were first translated into Syriac in the sixth century, by Sergius of Reshaina and then revised by Phocas of Edessa in the late seventh century.[59] The *Homilies* of Gregory Nazianzen were first translated at the end of the fifth century, were revised in the sixth, and were revised again in 623–4, by Paul of Edessa, using a different group of Greek manuscripts.[60] The *Cathedral Homilies* of Severus were translated into Syriac in the sixth century by Paul of Callinicus, and his translation was revised in the seventh by Jacob of Edessa. The *Hymns* of Severus were translated in the early seventh century by Paul of Edessa and revised later in the seventh century, by Jacob of Edessa. Basil of Caesarea's *De Spiritu Sancto* was translated in the late fourth century and then re-translated, probably in the seventh.[61] A collection of twenty-eight homilies of Basil was translated into Syriac in the fifth century, and another version was produced in the seventh.[62] There also seem to have been two translations of the *Constitutiones Asceticae*, attributed to Basil in the Syriac tradition. There may also have been two translations of Basil's *Hexameron*.[63]

59. On the Syriac translations of the corpus of Ps.-Dionysius, see W. Strothmann, *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weihe* (Wiesbaden, 1977–8), II, XI–LX, esp. XII, XIX–XXXII. For Sergius's translation, see I. Perczel, 'Sergius of Reshaina's Syriac Translation of the *Dionysian Corpus*. Some Preliminary Remarks', in C. Baffioni, ed., *La diffusione dell' eredità classica nell' età tardoantica e medievale: Filologia, storia, dottrina* (Alessandria, 2000), 79–94. M. van Esbroeck 'La triple preface syriaque de Phocas', in Y. de Andia (ed.), *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident* (Paris, 1996), 171–9 gives a French trans. of Phocas's 'triple preface' to his Syriac translation.

60. See J.-C. Haelewyck, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: Versio Syriaca I: Oratio XL* (Turnhout, 2001), vi–xiii; A. B. Schmidt, *Sancti Gregorii Nazinzeni Opera: Versio Syriaca II. Orationes XIII, XLI* (Turnhout, 2002), xx–xxii; J.-C. Haelewyck, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: Versio Syriaca III: Orationes XXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX*, (Turnhout, 2005), v–vi; J.-C. Haelewyck, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera: Versio Syriaca IV: Orationes XXVIII, XXIX, XXX et XXXI* (Turnhout, 2007), v–vi. Also cf. A. de Halleux, 'La version syriaque des *Discours* de Grégoire de Nazianze', in J. Mossay (ed.), *II. Symposium Nazianzenum: Louvain la-Neuve, 25–28 août 1981* (Paderborn, 1983), 109–10. See also, A. Schmidt, 'The Literary Tradition of Gregory of Nazianzus in Syriac Literature and its Historical Context', *The Harp* 11–12 (1998–9), 127–34; cf. 128: 'It was in 624 that the famous translator and syriac [*sic*] author Paul, bishop of Edessa, subjected the homilies to a new translation. The first translation had not only been thoroughly revised but was translated anew on the basis of different Greek manuscripts'.

61. See D. G. K. Taylor, *The Syriac Versions of the De spiritu sancto by Basil of Caesarea* (Louvain, 1999), xxv–xlii.

62. See P. J. Fedwick, 'The Translations of the Works of Basil before 1400', in P. J. Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (Toronto, 1981), 2:449–451, and S. P. Brock, 'Basil's *Homily on Deut. xv 9*: Some Remarks on the Syriac Manuscript Tradition', in J. Dümmer (ed.), *Texte und Textkritik: Eine Aufsatzsammlung* (Berlin, 1987), 62–6. On the homilies, see also S. P. Brock, 'Traduzioni Siriache degli Scritti di Basilio', in É. Baudry et al. (eds.), *Basilio tra Oriente e Occidente* (Magnano, Biella, 2001), 168–73. The latter article contains valuable information about the manuscript tradition of the works of Basil in Syriac.

63. For these points, see Fedwick, 'The Translations of the Works of Basil before 1400', 448–9.

Much the same pattern holds for the books of 'the outsiders'. Many of the works listed by Bar Hebraeus were translated or re-translated in the course of the seventh century. Athanasius of Balad translated Aristotle's *Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*.[64] By the time Athanasius died, in 684, the entire *Organon* was available in Syriac. Later in the seventh century or in the eighth, Jacob of Edessa produced a revised translation of Aristotle's *Categories*,[65]and George of the Arabs, who had perhaps been Athanasius's student, produced a revision of the translation of the *Categories* as well as a commentary on that work. George also translated the *On Interpretation* and provided an introduction to it; he translated the *Analytics*, as well, with both commentary and introduction.[66]

Most of the translators whom we know by name who rendered these books into Syriac or who revised previous translations are men known to have been students at Qenneshre. Jacob of Edessa, Athanasius of Balad, and Paul of Edessa were all 'students' there. A strong circumstantial case can be made that George of the Arabs studied there as well. We do not know if Phocas of Edessa studied there, but it has been suggested that he was perhaps friends with Jacob of Edessa. Future study of whether there was a specific translation technique taught at Qenneshre will help us discover whether translations whose authors we do not know were also produced at Qenneshre or by its graduates.

Much work needs to be done before this can be asserted with greater confidence, but based on all these things, it seems possible to suggest that Bar Hebraeus's enumeration of the books that are read in the church has as an ancestor an earlier Miaphysite curriculum of study and that this first took shape hundreds of years earlier, in the seventh century, perhaps at the monastery of Qenneshre.

If this is so, what conclusions can we draw? The testimony of the canons of Jacob and the other pieces of evidence I have tried to marshall in this chapter

64. For Athanasius's lost translation of the *Sophistical Refutations*, see Kh. Georr, *Les Catégories d'Aristote dans leurs versions syro-arabes* (Beirut, 1948), 198–9, where Abū al-Khayr al-Ḥasan b. Suwār criticises Athanasius for not understanding Aristotle's ideas in the text, perhaps, just as Ḥunayn's later and more accurate translations meant that Sergius of Reshaina translations were not copied and preserved, Athanasius's translations suffered a similar fate. For Athanasius's lost translation of the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Topics*, see S. P. Brock, 'Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eighth Century on Translations From Greek', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9 (1999), 238–46. On Athanasius's translation and commentary activity in general, see S. P. Brock, 'The Syriac Commentary Tradition', in C. Burnett (ed.), *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts* (London, 1993), 4–5.

65. See Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 251, 255; S. P. Brock, 'The Syriac Commentary Tradition', in C. Burnett (ed.), *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts* (London, 1993), 4, 5.

66. Cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 257; Brock, 'The Syriac Commentary Tradition', 4, 7–8. See R. J. Gottheil, 'The Syriac Versions of the Categories of Aristotle', *Hebraica* 9 (1893), 166–215; G. Furlani, 'La Versione e il Commento di Giorgio delle Nazioni all' Organo Aristotelico', *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica*, n.s., vol. 3/2 (1923), 305–33.

suggest that the priest or monk who learned the Psalms and the lectionary or the Scriptures from his village teacher or at a local monastery and then ceased his studies may not have been sufficiently equipped to defend Miaphysite orthodoxy against potential rivals. Nor could such a person always be trusted to maintain the integrity of the boundaries that were supposed to exist between different Christian confessions. The leaders of the Miaphysite movement were unhappy about the chaotic confessional situation on the ground in the seventh and early eighth centuries.

At least part of the answer to this chaotic state of affairs was institutional. Some young men pursued studies beyond the level of the local village or monastic school. It was at places like Qenneshre and certain other high-powered Miaphysite monasteries, such as Mar Mattai and Mar Zakai,[67] that the intellectual underpinnings of the Syriac-speaking Miaphysite movement in the seventh century were created and maintained. Miaphysite identity radiated most strongly from these centres and from their graduates. The further one travelled from them, the more likely one was to find confessional confusion, mixing, and chaos. It was at Qenneshre and perhaps other places like it that a graduate-school syllabus crystallised. It was here that the church leadership was trained. The village priest may not have been able to answer the questions of a confessional rival in a world also characterised by low-level theological skirmishing, but he could write a letter to somebody who had been trained at a spiritual Sandhurst like Qenneshre, and he could ask that person for help. This is precisely what we see in the letters of George of the Arabs and of Jacob of Edessa.

If this picture is at all persuasive, we can say that the translation and retranslation of texts was driven by the need for a syllabus that equipped the spiritual and intellectual core of the Miaphysite movement, men who were operating in an environment of unstable and insecure identities and confessional 'brand' competition. In such an environment, there was a great need to marginally differentiate themselves from rivals and to assert and draw boundaries between their communities and others.

The continued existence of the Miaphysite church depended on its ability to reproduce a class of leaders who were committed to the doctrinal positions of their movement and who could ably defend those positions against the attacks of rivals.

Of the large number of Christian writers who preceded them, members of the Miaphysite movement—like members of the Nestorian and Chalcedonian movements—selected certain authors as spiritual and doctrinal exemplars whose works were to be studied and whose views were to be imitated, taught,

67. On these monasteries as examples of 'Greco-Syriac' monasteries, see J. Watt, 'Al-Fārābī and the History of the Syriac *Organon*', in Kiraz, *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone*, 759–61.

and transmitted to subsequent generations. There was of course overlap between the writers deemed 'Fathers' by Miaphysites, Nestorians, and Chalcedonians, but there were also important differences. Rabban bar ʿIdta was reading Nestorius in his cell, while Jacob of Edessa lamented that he did not have his Philoxenus with him, but both men read Basil. In some important sense, then, Miaphysite identity, like Nestorian identity and Chalcedonian identity, was a function of what was being read and taught to and by the leaders of the movement in its intellectual centres. In some sense, therefore, then as now, you are what you read.

The Prophet's City before the Prophet

Ibn Zabāla (d. after 199/814) on Pre-Islamic Medina

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It is only exceptionally that a historian of this region in this period can deal with a source that directly addresses the formation and expression of any form of identity, but research presented in this volume and elsewhere has demonstrated some fruitful approaches to the types of material more commonly encountered. For the Islamic world in particular, investigations of how Muslim scholars dealt with a given region's, or even a people's, pre-Islamic history, either through mythopoeia or selective memory loss (for this last, see Savant's chapter in this volume), have led to interesting analyses of identity expression.[1]

In my own contribution, I will follow a similar approach by examining some of the reports on Medina's pre-Islamic history cited by later scholars from Ibn Zabāla's now lost *Akhbār al-Madīna*. Medina is an illuminating case study for two reasons. First, a local historical tradition developed early in the town (by the end of the second/eighth century, at the latest) alongside the emerging genres of Prophetic biography and universal history, which dealt at varying lengths with the town because of its role in Muḥammad's career. This allows us to compare the way in which a local historian approached his town's pre-Islamic past with the attitudes taken by scholars in other fields and often from other regions. Second, throughout its pre-and early Islamic history Medina was inhabited by distinct groups—for example, the local inhabitants who assisted the Prophet (the *anṣār*), the Meccans who emigrated to the town with

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1. See, e.g., U. Haarmann, 'Regional Sentiment in Medieval Islamic Egypt', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (1980), 55–66; S. B. Savant, 'Isaac as the Persians' Ishmael: Pride and the Pre-Islamic Past in Ninth and Tenth-Century Islam', *Comparative Islamic Studies* 2 (2006), 5–25.

the Prophet (the *muhājirūn*), and the Jews—who appear at times to have conceived of those outside their own groups as 'others' from whom they could distinguish themselves.

Muslims in the first century AH (the seventh century AD) were probably already interested in the pre-Islamic history of Medina, because it provided the background for the spectacular rise and success of the new religion during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad and the first four caliphs. Modern scholars have also been keen students of the pre-Islamic town since at least the nineteenth century, some to contextualise the emergence of Islam and some for other reasons.[2] For example, the existence of an apparently prosperous Jewish community in the town has been the subject of a notable body of research.[3] Recent studies have dealt with the balance of power between the Arabs and Jews on the eve of Muḥammad's *hijra*,[4] and the extent of the authority of the Himyarite kings of South Arabia and the Persian monarchs over the region.[5]

Ibn Zabāla, the late-second-/early-ninth-century historian with whom I will be primarily concerned in this paper, had something to say about several of these issues, although it is only recently that scholars have begun to make use

2. Notable modern studies of pre-Islamic Medina include J. Wellhausen, 'Medina vor dem Islam', in his *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1884–99), 4:1–64; A. J. Wensinck, *Muhammad and the Jews of Medina* (Freiburg, 1975), 6–38; A. I. al-Sharīf, *Dawr al-Ḥijāz fī al-ḥayāt al-siyāsiyya al-ʿāmma fī al-qarnayn al-awwal wa-l-thānī li-l-hijra* (Cairo, 1968), 48–63; M. J. Kister, 'al-Ḥīra: Some Notes on Its Relations with Arabia', *Arabica* 15 (1968), 143–69; I. Hasson, 'Contributions à l'étude des Aws et des Ḫazraǧ', *Arabica* 36 (1989), 1–35; numerous studies by Michael Lecker, esp. his *Muslims, Jews and Pagans: Studies on Early Islamic Medina* (Leiden, 1995), and the articles collected in his *Jews and Arabs in Pre-and Early Islamic Arabia* (Aldershot, 1998), and *People, Tribes and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muḥammad* (Aldershot, 2005).

3. E.g., R. Dozy, *Die Israeliten zu Mekka von Davids Zeit bis in's fünfte Jahrhundert unsrer Zeitrechnung: Ein Beitrag zur alttestamentlichen Kritik und zur Erforschung des Ursprungs des Islams* (Leipzig and Haarlem, 1864); C. C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York, 1933), 1–27; C. J. Gadd, 'The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus', *Anatolian Studies* 8 (1958), esp. 79–89; M. Gil, 'The Origin of the Jews of Yathrib', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984), 203–24; G. D. Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia: From Ancient Times to Their Eclipse under Islam* (Columbia SC, 1988); C. J. Robin, 'Ḥimyar et Israël', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'année: académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (2004), 862–7.

4. See esp. the studies by Hasson and Lecker cited here, in n. 2, and M. Lecker, 'Wāqidī's Account on the Status of the Jews of Medina: A Study of a Combined Report', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54 (1995), 15–32; M. Lecker, 'Were the Jewish Tribes in Arabia Clients of Arab Tribes?', in *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, ed. M. Bernards and J. Nawas (Leiden, 2005), 50–69. Here I use the term 'Arab' primarily to refer to the non-Jewish inhabitants of pre-Islamic Medina, the Aws and the Khazraj.

5. Kister, 'al-Ḥīra', 145–9; M. Lecker, 'The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), 109–26; Robin, 'Ḥimyar', 870, 879. On the extent of Roman control over the northern Ḥijāz, see also D. F. Graf, 'Qurā ʿArabiyya and Provincia Arabia', in P.-L. Gatier et al. (eds.), *Géographie historique au Proche-Orient (Syrie, Phénice, Arabie, grecques, romaines, byzantines)* (Paris, 1988), 171–211.

of his material in their research. Here, however, I am not concerned with such precise topics as these and will focus instead on analysing the picture of pre-Islamic Medina and its inhabitants that Ibn Zabāla personally wished his students to see. Since he was probably the first local historian of Medina—he was one of the earliest Muslim local historians of any town in the Islamic world—he can offer great help to modern historians attempting to understand early Medinan attitudes to what, for them, made their town and its inhabitants more noteworthy and important than other cities. In spite of Medina's eventual widespread acceptance as one of the Islamic world's holy cities, its local scholars still felt keenly the need to argue for the town's greatest possible significance; articles by M. J. Kister and Albert Arazi have demonstrated that the competition for precedence (*mufāḍala*) between Medina and Mecca—and at times Jerusalem as well—for the top spot among Islam's holy cities continued throughout the pre-modern period.[6] Michael Lecker, among others, has drawn our attention to the continuing prevalence of pro-Medinan and pro-*anṣār* apologetics in many reports about pre-Islamic Medina, and Arazi points out that Ibn Zabāla himself prominently displays his pro-Medina and pro-*anṣār* tendencies.[7] As Medina's earliest local historian, Ibn Zabāla's approach to extolling the merits and distinctions (*faḍāʾil*) peculiar to his town and its inhabitants are of interest. Many reports and traditions that highlight Medina's *faḍāʾil* focus on the Islamic era—Medina did, after all, come to be seen as the 'Prophet's City' (*madīnat al-nabī*)—but pre-Islamic history, too, continued to be important.

Ibn Zabāla and His History of Medina

Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zabāla was a native of Medina and composed what was probably the first local history of his hometown.[8] This work is not extant, but numerous citations taken from it survive in later works, particularly local histories of Medina. The most important source for citations from Ibn Zabāla's work is the *Wafāʾ al-wafā bi-akhbār dār al-muṣṭafā* by ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Samhūdī (d. 911/1506). In this history of Medina, al-Samhūdī, who says he had access to a copy of Ibn Zabāla's lost work, cites

6. M. J. Kister, '"You Shall Only Set Out for Three Mosques": A Study of an Early Tradition', *Le Muséon* 82 (1969), 173–96; A. Arazi, 'Matériaux pour l'étude du conflit de préséance entre la Mekke et Médine', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), 177–235.

7. Lecker, 'Were the Jewish Tribes', esp. 51–9; Arazi, 'Matériaux', 198, n.65. On pro-*anṣār* accounts of Muḥammad's *hijra* to Medina, see U. Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton, 1995), 169–85.

8. On Ibn Zabāla, see esp. H. Munt, 'Writing the History of an Arabian Holy City: Ibn Zabāla and the First Local History of Medina', *Arabica* 59 (2012), 1–34.

him approximately six hundred times.[9] We know from Ibn Zabāla's own words, cited by several later scholars, that he was in the process of writing his history in Ṣafar 199/September–October 814.[10]

We know little else about Ibn Zabāla. Several pre-modern Arabic biographical dictionaries include a brief entry on him, but they are interested mostly in his reliability as a transmitter of Prophetic *ḥadīth*s;[11] concerning this, at least, his reputation was bad. Even al-Samhūdī, who cited Ibn Zabāla so frequently in his history, refers to his bad reputation as a transmitter of *ḥadīth*s.[12] Luckily for Ibn Zabāla, being considered a bad *ḥadīth* transmitter did not prevent one's historical reports being taken seriously.[13]

Thanks largely to al-Samhūdī's citations, we know more about Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna* than we do about the man himself. Al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) who also saw a copy of the work before it was lost, noted that it was large, and the number of citations seems to confirm this.[14] Nonetheless, in spite of one scholar's claim that, thanks to the later quotations, we possess the vast majority of Ibn Zabāla's work, we cannot be sure of this.[15] We also have little idea how the work was organised. One modern scholar has collected and published the citations that he found from Ibn Zabāla's history in the later Medinan local histories.[16] This is an important achievement, but it cannot be considered a full 'reconstruction' of Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna*. Salāma has organised the citations more or less as did al-Samhūdī in his *Wafāʾ al-wafā*. Thus, for example, there is a section including Ibn Zabāla's reports on the various names given to Medina by early Muslims;[17] we have no idea whether Ibn Zabāla actually included such a chapter in his original work. We know only that al-Samhūdī cited Ibn Zabāla a few times in his chapter on these names. We are better informed about the pre-Islamic section of Ibn Zabāla's history, because al-Samhūdī sometimes informs us of how his citations from Ibn Zabāla on that subject fitted with each other in the copy that he possessed (al-Samhūdī makes it clear, for example, that Ibn Zabāla had a distinct section on settlement in

9. That al-Samhūdī definitely possessed a copy of Ibn Zabāla's history, see for example his *Wafāʾ al-wafā bi-akhbār dār al-muṣṭafā*, ed. Q. al-Sāmarrāʾī, 5 vols. (London, 1422/2001), 1:79–80.

10. For al-Samhūdī's confirmation of this, see ibid., 2:65.

11. The most detailed biographical entry is in al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. B.ʿA. Maʿrūf, 35 vols. (Beirut, 1402–13/1982–92), 25:60–67.

12. For example, al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 2:65.

13. The famous and widely cited historian al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) was also considered by many an unreliable *ḥadīth* transmitter; see Lecker, 'Wāqidī's Account', 20–3.

14. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Iʿlān bi-l-tawbīkh li-man dhamma al-taʾrīkh*, ed. F. Rosenthal and Ṣ. A. al-ʿAlī (Beirut, n.d.), 274.

15. ʿA.-A. ʿUsaylān, *al-Madīna al-munawwara fī āthār al-muʾallifīn wa-l-bāḥithīn qadīm*^{an} *wa-ḥadīth*^{an} (Medina, 1418/1997), 30.

16. S. ʿA.-ʿA. Z. Salāma, *Akhbār al-Madīna li-Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zabāla* (Medina, 1424/2003).

17. Ibid., 184–7.

pre-Islamic Medina).[18] Even so, we cannot be sure of the arrangement of all of Ibn Zabāla's pre-Islamic material, nor should we assume that al-Samhūdī preserved all of it. He actually tells us in one instance that he has left some pre-Islamic material out of Ibn Zabāla's history.[19] For this reason, I restrict myself in what follows to what Ibn Zabāla did say, rather than what he might not have said; even so, the reader should bear in mind that there may be other sections of the work that are permanently lost (or yet to be found) that would give a different perspective.

Ibn Zabāla on pre-Islamic Medina

Almost all of Ibn Zabāla's extant material on the pre-Islamic town can be found in al-Samhūdī's *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, although substantial amounts also appear in other Medinan local histories and in geographical works by Ibn Rusta (fl. 290–300/903–13) and al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094). (The latter does not name the source for his material on pre-Islamic Medina, but it is seems that it derives ultimately, if not directly, from Ibn Zabāla's history.) This chapter is based on the citations from Ibn Zabāla in these extant works, primarily in their sections on pre-Islamic Medina. Some of them, especially al-Samhūdī's *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, include Ibn Zabāla's pre-Islamic material in other sections, and I have used some of these quotations to supplement my discussion where necessary.[20]

Although several extracts will be discussed in more detail below, I will present here a brief overview of Ibn Zabāla's history of pre-Islamic Medina, as it has come down to us. Al-Samhūdī tells us that Ibn Zabāla began his discussion of Medina's history with the town's earliest inhabitants, who were known as Ṣuʿl and Fālij. They and their people, who included a woman named Zuhra, were raided by the Prophet David and then wiped out by a mysterious 'worm' (*dūd*).[21] The Amalekites, a people well known from Biblical history,[22] came next (Ibn Zabāla does not seem to have thought that Ṣuʿl and Fālij were themselves Amalekites), but the Prophet Moses sent an army against them, and they were destroyed. This army disobeyed Moses's order that they exterminate all the Amalekites in the Ḥijāz—they could not bring themselves to kill the Amalekite

18. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:294.

19. Ibid., 1:308.

20. The most important source for Ibn Zabāla's material on pre-Islamic Medina is ibid., 1:291–390. Many similar, occasionally identical, passages can be found in Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-Aʿlāq al-nafīsa*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1892), 59–64; al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. A. Ferré and A. van Leeuwen, 2 vols. (Tunis, 1992; repr. Beirut, n.d.), 1:413–8 (§§696–703).

21. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:294.

22. The Amalekites were a (semi-)nomadic group who appear in the Bible as the enemies of Israel, until their defeat by David; see *ABD*, s.v. Amalek (G. L. Mattingly).

king's handsome son—so they were banished from the land of Israel and decided to settle in the Ḥijāz. For Ibn Zabāla, this is how the Jews first came to the Ḥijāz and to Medina.[23] At some point—it is not clear how Ibn Zabāla saw this as fitting into the scheme of things (or whether he even cared)—Moses and his brother Aaron came to Uḥud, a mountain north of Medina, where Aaron died, as Moses had predicted, and was buried.[24] Ibn Zabāla also notes the discovery of two inscriptions near graves atop Jammāʾ Umm Khālid, to the west of the town, which were said to commemorate visits to the town by messengers of Solomon and Jesus.[25] There is also a discussion of where the Jewish tribes settled in Medina.[26]

The Jews remained in control of Medina until the Maʾrib dam burst and the Aws and the Khazraj—the future *anṣār* (helpers) of Muḥammad—left South Arabia and came to settle there.[27] At first, the Aws and the Khazraj accepted the overlordship of their Jewish neighbours, but, as they themselves became more numerous and powerful, they began to resent their subjugation. Relations between the Arabs and the Jews worsened, and things were eventually brought to a head by the actions of the Jewish king al-Fiṭyawn, who, according to Ibn Zabāla, insisted on sleeping with all the newly wed Arab women before their husbands did. When the sister of the Khazrajī Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān was confronted with this threat, he disguised himself as a woman and killed al-Fiṭyawn. The Aws and the Khazraj appealed for assistance to their kinsman Abū Jubayla in Syria, and, thanks to some astoundingly beautiful poetry from an equally astoundingly ugly man, he answered their call. Through a ruse, the Aws and the Khazraj, with their Syrian allies, then wiped out most of the Jewish leadership in Medina and took control of the town.[28] After this, the main event in Medina's pre-*hijra* history recounted by Ibn Zabāla was the arrival there of the Himyarite king Tubbaʿ, who wanted to destroy the town. Two learned men (*ḥabrān*) from the Jewish tribe of Qurayẓa convinced him not to, by predicting that it would one day become the place of emigration (*muhājar*) for an Ishmaelite prophet called Aḥmad, who would come at the end of time.[29]

23. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:296–7.

24. Ibid., 1:300.

25. Ibid., 1:295–296. The accounts attached to these inscriptions are very similar and probably reflect different transmissions of one earlier account.

26. In ibid., 1:299–308.

27. Ibid., 1:309; 316–7.

28. Ibid., 1:327–9, 330–1. (This passage is translated below.)

29. Ibid., 1:342; 3:378–9; al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra bi-talkhīṣ maʿālim dār al-hijra*, ed. ʿA.-A ʿUsaylān (Medina, 1422/2002), 310–2. It is not clear how much of this last report in al-Marāghī's *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra* should be attributed to Ibn Zabāla and how much to the Andalusī historian Razīn ibn Muʿāwiya (d. 524/1129 or 535/1140), so I have only used the sections that we can be reasonably confident were in Ibn Zabāla's work.

Ibn Zabāla also included in his work a lengthy topographical discussion of the settlement of the various Arab tribes and clans in Medina after they had dispossessed the Jews, and of their fortifications and tower houses and the fighting that erupted between them.[30]

One of the most striking features of Ibn Zabāla's account of pre-Islamic Medina is the quantity of topographical material he included. There is a good deal of this in the extant citations, and originally there was clearly more that has not been preserved. Al-Samhūdī tells us that Ibn Zabāla provided the names of many more fortifications (*ḥuṣūn*, sing. *ḥiṣn*) and tower houses (*āṭām*, sing. *uṭum*) belonging to the Jews, but he did not include them in his account because they were no longer known in his own day.[31] These topographical citations have been the most important of Ibn Zabāla's reports for recent historians seeking to illuminate the balance of power between Jews and Arabs and the various sub-tribes and clans in Medina on the eve of the *hijra*.[32] Other sources—notably Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356/967) *Kitāb al-Aghānī*—include similar material, but in much less detail.[33]

Why did Ibn Zabāla include so much topographical material about the Jews' and Arabs' settlement in Medina? The citations from Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna* concerning all periods of history up to his own day have a strongly topographical focus, so we should not be surprised that he includes so much more topographical material than do others for pre-Islamic Medina. This seems to reflect an interest in the town's past in light of its situation in his own day. Later Medinan local historians certainly display this concern. Al-Samhūdī did not mention Jewish tower houses whose whereabouts were not known in his own time; from this we can infer that he was not interested in earlier sites that could not be integrated into the topography of Medina in his day. He also stated in the lengthy title of his chapter on the settlement of the Arab tribes that 'this is useful for knowledge of the locations of mosques that are no longer known today'.[34] We have no idea whether Ibn Zabāla entitled the relevant chapter of his book so explicitly, but this concern is apparent in the extant citations (hence his usefulness to al-Samhūdī). The following quotation is a typical example:

> Ibn Zabāla said: [The Banū Ḥāritha of the Aws] built there—that is, in their second court (*dār*)—a fortress (*uṭum*) called al-Rayyān, where the mosque of the Banū Ḥāritha [would later be].[35]

30. See in al-Samhūdī, *Wafā' al-wafā*, 1:343–83.

31. Ibid., 1:308; see also Lecker, *Muslims, Jews and Pagans*, xii, n.13.

32. See the studies by Hasson and Lecker referred to in notes 2 and 4, and M. J. Kister, 'The Market of the Prophet', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965), 272–6.

33. See in Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 24 vols. (Cairo, 1927–74), 22:107–15.

34. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafā' al-wafā*, 1:343.

35. Ibid., 1:346.

This interest may be due to the fact that several of the old Jewish and Arab tower houses could probably still be seen in Medina in Ibn Zabāla's day, but, even where this was not the case, we can say that Ibn Zabāla was interested in providing his readers and students with information that allowed them to see how his hometown's pre-Islamic history fitted into the Islamic town's topography.

In addition to this topographical material, Ibn Zabāla included several narrative accounts focusing on the earliest inhabitants of Medina, the arrival of the Jews in Medina, the coming of the Aws and the Khazraj to the town, and the Arabs' wresting of power from the Jews. Of interest here is Ibn Zabāla's reason for choosing to include these particular stories in his history of Medina. We know from other sources that there were rival accounts of many of these topics, accounts that were probably circulating in Ibn Zabāla's day. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, for instance, provide two alternative explanations for the first arrival of the Jews in the Ḥijāz: al-Ṭabarī identified Arabia's Jews as those who fled Palestine after Nebuchadnezzar's (r. 605–562 BC) destruction of the Temple in 586 BC, while Abū al-Faraj provided a Moses/Amalekites report similar to Ibn Zabāla's, alongside another account that identifies the Ḥijāzī Jews as refugees from the Roman suppression of the Jews in Syria (which presumably refers to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 or the aftermath of Bar Kokhba's revolt in AD 132–5).[36] Ibn Zabāla was a proud Medinan, and a comparison of his presentation of pre-Islamic history with that of others can help us to understand how Medinans themselves attempted to give their town and its inhabitants unique *faḍā'il*.

Some of Ibn Zabāla's narrative accounts praise Medina's pleasant setting. For example, the rhymed prose (*saj'*) of ʿAmr ibn ʿĀmir, the leader of the South Arabian refugees, on the virtues of settling in Medina:[37]

> Whoever wants a solid place in muddy land, those who give sustenance in barren land, those who attain vengeance, let him come to Yathrib [the earlier name of Medina] of the date palms. (*Man kāna yurīdu al-rāsiyāt fī al-waḥl wa-l-muṭ'imāt fī al-maḥl wa-l-mudrikāt bi-l-dhaḥl*[38] *fal-yalḥaq bi-Yathrib dhāt al-nakhl*.)

Abū al-Faraj, in the *Aghānī*, includes a much longer *saj'* passage of which the section about Medina is only a part; other sections discuss the relative merits of other regions in which the emigrants settled. Ibn Zabāla, so far as we can tell,

36. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al., 3 parts in 13 vols. (Leiden, 1879–1901), 1:647 = *The History of al-Ṭabarī*. Vol. 4, *The Ancient Kingdoms*, trans. M. Perlmann (Albany, 1987), 45; Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī*, 22:107–8. On these various reports, see Gil, 'Origin'; Newby, *History*, 14–18; 24–32.

37. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafā' al-wafā*, 1:316.

38. The text in al-Sāmarrā'ī's edition of the *Wafā' al-wafā* has *daḥl* (chasm); the reading *dhaḥl* (vengeance), which seems to make more sense, is noted among the variants by al-Sāmarrā'ī (see *Wafā' al-wafā*, 1:316, n.4), and is preferred by Salāma, *Akhbār al-Madīna*, 170.

was interested only in recording his praise of Medina.[39] Some of his stories appear to have had, at least in part, a moralising message: the Amalekites were 'exceptionally haughty' (*wa-ʿataw ʿutuww*^{an} *kabīr*^{an}) and the enemies of God's chosen people of the time, so they were destroyed.[40] Al-Fiṭyawn was despicable, so he was overthrown.[41]

Utility in constructing etymologies seems to have played a role in Ibn Zabāla's decision to include certain reports in his history. Several appear to be there partly to explain how a particular area of Medina in Ibn Zabāla's day came by its name. No Medinan contemporary of Ibn Zabāla would have read his account of Medina's earliest inhabitants Ṣuʿl and Fālij and their descendant Zuhra without recalling that there had been an area of Medina known as Zuhra.[42] The same applies to his account of the Himyarite Tubbaʿ's excavation of a well that came to be known as the King's Well (Biʾr al-Malik).[43] In fact, much of Ibn Zabāla's extant material on Tubbaʿ's time in Medina has a distinctly etymologising purpose.[44] Other accounts of Tubbaʿ's expedition note that, although he wanted to destroy Medina, he did not do so because he was convinced otherwise by the learned Jewish men. Ibn Zabāla has this, but he does not appear to have included the rest of the story, in which Tubbaʿ returns home with the learned Jewish men and converts to Judaism.[45] In other sources, therefore, the main point of this story is to explain how South Arabia was converted to Judaism; for Ibn Zabāla, as far as we can tell, it rather nicely explained how certain places came by their names.[46] These reports further helped Ibn Zabāla fit Medina's pre-Islamic history into its Islamic landscape.

39. Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī*, 22:110.

40. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:296.

41. Ibid., 1:327–9, 330–1.

42. Ibid., 1:294; see further 4:312–3 on the settlement Zuhra and M. Lecker, 'Lost Towns: Zuhra and Yathrib', in J. Schiettecatte and C. J. Robin (eds.), *L'Arabie à la veille de l'Islam: Bilan clinique* (Paris, 2009), 29–35.

43. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 3:378–9.

44. See especially the report in al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra*, 310–2, where Tubbaʿ leaves Medina for South Arabia and bestows names upon certain locations on the way. For example, 'When [Tubbaʿ] had departed from his camp in Qanāt, he said, "This is the canal (*qanāt*) of the earth", and so it was called Wādī Qanāt. He passed by al-Jurf and said, "This is the bank of the earth that is hollowed out by torrents (*jurf al-arḍ*)"—that is, its highest part—so it was named al-Jurf'.

45. Cf. M. Lecker, 'The Conversion of Ḥimyar to Judaism and the Jewish Banū Hadl of Medina', *Die Welt des Orients* 26 (1995), 135, who suggests that, although it is not preserved anywhere, Ibn Zabāla probably provided the full report.

46. For the gist of the accounts in which Tubbaʿ goes on to convert Yemen to Judaism, see the following slightly different recensions of Ibn Isḥāq's version: Ibn Isḥāq, *Kitāb al-Siyar wa-l-maghāzī (riwāyat Yūnus ibn Bukayr)*, ed. S. Zakkār (Beirut, 1398/1978), 52–6; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. M. al-Saqqā et al., 4 vols. (Cairo, 1355/1936), 1:19–28; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:901–8 = *The History of al-Ṭabarī*. Vol. 5, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany, 1999), 164–74. For modern discussions of Yemen's conversion to Judaism/monotheism see, in addition to Robin's and Lecker's articles cited in notes 3 and 45, also Z. Rubin, 'Judaism and Raḥmanite Monotheism in the Ḥimyarite Kingdom in the Fifth Century', in T. Parfitt (ed.), *Israel and Ishmael: Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* (Richmond, Surrey, 2000), 32–51.

The reports were no doubt also selected and shaped to give Medina and the Muslim Medinans' ancestors the best pre-Islamic history possible. The town had an excellent Islamic history—when no one else was willing to offer Muḥammad protection and let him preach, the Aws and the Khazraj of Medina stepped forward to support him—but it could be said to lack pre-Islamic prestige. After all, no matter how old a settlement Medina may have been, before Muḥammad it was a fairly small town of only local importance.[47] Ibn Zabāla, however, worked with the various reports and legends available in his day to form a pre-Islamic history with which Medina's Muslim inhabitants could proudly identify.

Associating pre-Islamic Medina with pre-Islamic monotheism was easy enough for Ibn Zabāla. Even if the town's pre-Islamic Jewish population appears to have been passed over by Late Antique commentators, it was well known among Muslim scholars. Some of them, including Ibn Zabāla, tried to make this connection even stronger by introducing several important pre-Islamic prophets into the town's history. Unlike Mecca—to which, many Muslims agreed, numerous prophets had come, and Jerusalem, the home of the Prophets David and Solomon, among others—Medina was not famous for its pre-Islamic prophetic connections. In the arena of *faḍāʾil* competition, this was not promising, and Medina was overshadowed in this regard by its two greatest competitors among the holy cities, Mecca and Jerusalem. Ibn Zabāla sought to rectify this: as we have seen, he has Moses ultimately responsible for the region's conquest from the Amalekites, he provides what he claims to be the text of inscriptions connecting Solomon and Jesus to the town, and he even has Moses's brother Aaron's death and burial on Uḥud, just north of the town. It may also be significant for Ibn Zabāla's presentation of pre-Islamic Medina's monotheism that he adhered to the theory that at least two of Medina's important Jewish clans, Qurayẓa and al-Naḍīr, were Israelite in origin—he calls them *al-kāhinān* (the two priests), referring to a supposed descent from Aaron;[48] others had Qurayẓa and al-Naḍīr as Arab proselytes from the Banū Judhām.[49]

In spite of the connections that could be adduced between pre-Islamic Medina and monotheism, a problem remained: the Aws and the Khazraj were generally held by later Muslim scholars to have been idolaters in pre-Islamic times. Although Ibn Zabāla did not highlight their idolatry, neither could he substantially alter this image. Furthermore, an important aspect of Medina's pre-Islamic history that could not be ignored concerned the idolatrous Arab inhabitants' taking control of the town from the monotheist Jews. Ibn Zabāla's

47. Medina is apparently first referred to, as 'Yatribu' (*ya-at-ri-bu*), in an inscription of the Babylonian king Nabonidus (r. 556–39 BC); see Gadd, 'Harran Inscriptions', 59, 84.

48. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:327–8.

49. For the debate, see Gil, 'Origin'.

account of al-Fiṭyawn and Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān helps shed some light on how he dealt with this particular problem. Here is a translation of the episode as taken by al-Samhūdī from Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna*:[50]

> Ibn Zabāla said, on the authority of teachers among the Medinans: The Aws and the Khazraj resided in Medina, and they found the wealth, tower houses (*āṭām*), and palm groves in the hands of the Jews. They also found that [the Jews] had the power and numerical advantage. The Aws and the Khazraj remained as God wished, but then they asked [the Jews] to draw up a mutual protection agreement between them (*an yaʿqidū baynahum jiwār*^{an} *wa-ḥilf*^{an}), through which one side might be secure against the other, and they might [together] be protected from others. So they drew up the agreement and became committed to each other by oaths, participated, and worked together. They continued in that way for a long time. The Aws and the Khazraj grew in size and acquired wealth and numerical strength. When Qurayẓa and al-Naḍīr considered their situation, they became afraid that they would overcome their courts (*dūr*) and their properties. They prepared to act against them and terminated the *ḥilf* that had been between them. Qurayẓa and al-Naḍīr were more numerous and had better provisions and were known as 'the two priests' (*al-kāhinān*) and the Banū Ṣarīḥ,[51] concerning which Qays ibn al-Khaṭīm said praising them:
>
> Should anyone have designs to oppress us, the *kāhinān* will saddle the horses and stay the course.
> The Banū Ṣarīḥ forget pledges and give us shelter themselves, for they are virtuous and generous.
>
> The Aws and the Khazraj remained in their dwellings, afraid that the Jews would evict them, until Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān, brother of the Banū Sālim ibn ʿAwf ibn al-Khazraj, appeared among them, and the two tribes—the Aws and the Khazraj—made him their leader. Al-Fiṭyawn—that is, with a *kasra* on the *fāʾ*; Yāqūt has al-Fayṭawn[52]—was the king of the Jews in Zuhra. No bride could be presented in Yathrib among the two tribes—the Aws and the Khazraj—unless she had been brought before him so that he could be the one who took her virginity before her husband. Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān's sister was to marry a man from her people. While he was at his people's assembly (*nādī*), his sister suddenly emerged,

50. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:327–9; 330–1.

51. Elsewhere, Ibn Zabāla states that Qurayẓa and al-Naḍīr are the descendants of Eleazar son of Aaron (ʿAyzar ibn Hārūn), from whom the Zadokite priests of Jerusalem traced their descent; see al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:299–300; *ABD*, s.v. Eleazar (W. H. Propp).

52. This is al-Samhūdī's own gloss on the passage; Yāqūt died in 626/1229.

wearing such a garment as women wear in their homes (*idh kharajat ukhtuhu fuḍul*^{an}).[53] The people at this gathering (*ahl al-majlis*) looked at her, and Mālik became distressed. He came before her and severely reprehended her. She said: 'What will be done to me tomorrow is much greater than this! I am to be presented to someone who is not my husband'. When evening came, Mālik wrapped his clothing over his sword (*ishtamala ʿalā al-sayf*) and came before al-Fiṭyawn in disguise, among the women. When [the women] had left he rushed upon him and killed him. Then he went back to his people's court.

Then he and a group of his people sent to those of their people who had settled in Syria to inform them about their circumstances and to complain to them about the supremacy of the Jews. Their messenger was al-Ramaq ibn Zayd ibn Imriʾ al-Qays of the Banū Sālim ibn ʿAwf ibn al-Khazraj, who was short and ugly but an eloquent poet (*wa-kāna qabīḥ*^{an} *damīm*^{an} *shāʿir*^{an} *balīgh*^{an}). He continued until he came before Abū Jubayla of the Banū Jusham ibn al-Khazraj, who had moved from Yathrib to Syria. Someone said that Abū Jubayla was among the descendants of Jafna ibn ʿAmr ibn ʿĀmir, who had become a nobleman and king in Syria. . . .

So [al-Ramaq] complained to him about their circumstances and the supremacy of the Jews over them, what they were afraid of concerning them, and that they feared they would evict them [from Medina]. He also recited to him some of his poetry. [Abū Jubayla] was amazed by his poetry and eloquence, as well as by his frightful ugliness, and said, 'There is fragrant honey [even] in a repulsive container (*ʿasal ṭayyib fī wiʿāʾ khabīth*)!' Al-Ramaq replied, 'O king! Only a man's two smallest things are required of him—his tongue and his heart'. He replied, 'You speak the truth!' Abū Jubayla ventured forth with a large multitude to the assistance of the Aws and the Khazraj. Such is what Ibn Zabāla has said. . . .

Then [Ibn Zabāla] said, The Aws and the Khazraj said to Abū Jubayla, when he came to their aid: 'If the people come to know what you intend, they will fortify themselves in their tower houses (*āṭām*) and you will not be able to overcome them. So invite them to meet you and be kind to them, so they come to trust you and feel reassured; then you can take possession of them'. So he had food prepared for them and sent to their notables and leaders [inviting them to come to him]. All of their notables came to him; one man among them even set out to him with all his family and dependents, hoping to present them. But [Abū Jubayla] had built for them an enclosed place (*ḥayyiz*) into which he had put [some of his] people whom he had ordered to kill whoever came before them. This they

53. For this interpretation of *fuḍul*^{an}, as 'wearing such a garment as women wear in their homes', see E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (London, 1863–93), 6:2413 (s.v. f-ḍ-l).

> did and thus finished off their notables and leaders. So the Aws and the Khazraj came to control Medina, and they took the courts, properties, and tower houses.[54]

Several other sources discuss the Aws's and the Khazraj's taking control of Medina from the Jews in the time of Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān,[55] although their accounts range in length from a single line to a few pages.[56] There are many discrepancies between these accounts, over matters ranging from the genealogical (differences especially over the precise identities of al-Fiṭyawn and Abū Jubayla) to the identity of the distant power from whom the Medinan Arabs sought assistance. (Some accounts have this as the Himyarite king Tubbaʿ rather than the Syrian Abū Jubayla.) I will focus, however, on the role played by al-Fiṭyawn in Ibn Zabāla's account: he is not always mentioned in the other sources, and, when he is, his exercise of *ius primae noctis* is sometimes omitted.[57] We can compare, for example, Ibn Zabāla's account with two other versions that appear to be independent of his. These are Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's account and the story from the *Akhbār al-Yaman*, attributed to the enigmatic ʿAbīd ibn Sharya (or ʿUbayd ibn Shariya) and perhaps datable to the second/eighth century.[58] Although Abū al-Faraj mentions al-Fiṭyawn elsewhere, he does not refer

54. There follow some verses in praise of Abū Jubayla attributed to al-Ramaq.

55. Lecker dates Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān's career to the second half of the sixth century, based on the genealogists' report that he was the great-grandfather of two Companions of the Prophet; see Lecker, 'Were the Jewish Tribes', 54.

56. For longer accounts, see ʿAbīd ibn Sharya (attrib.), *Akhbār al-Yaman wa-ashʿārihā wa-ansābihā ʿalā al-wafāʾ wa-l-kamāl*, ed. F. Krenkow, appended to his edition of Ibn Hishām's *Kitāb al-Tījān fī mulūk Ḥimyar*, 2nd ed. (Sanaʿa, 1979), 460–4; Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī*, 3:40; 22:111–5; al-Bakrī, *Masālik*, 1:415–8; Razīn ibn Muʿāwiya, *apud* al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:329–30; 331–2; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1866–73), 4:463–465; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh*, ed. C. J. Tornberg (Leiden, 1851–76; reprinted in 12 vols. Beirut, 1965–67), 1:656–8. For shorter accounts and allusions, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab Maʿadd wa-l-Yaman al-kabīr*, ed. N. Ḥasan, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1408/1988), 1:414–5; 419–20; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-nasab: Riwāyat al-Sukkirī ʿan Ibn Ḥabīb*, ed. N. Ḥasan (Beirut, 1407/1986), 620; Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī, *apud* Ḥassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwān*, ed. W. ʿArafāt, 2 vols. (London, 1971), 2:235–6; al-Jāḥiẓ (attrib.), *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-aḍdād*, ed. G. van Vloten (Leiden, 1898), 282–3; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1379/1960), 1:197; 203–4; Ibn Durayd, *Kitāb al-Ishtiqāq*, ed. ʿA.-S. M. Hārūn, 2nd ed. (Baghdad, 1399/1979), 457, 461; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-ʿarab*, ed. ʿA.-S.M. Hārūn, 4th ed. (Cairo, n.d.), 356. For brief secondary discussions, see Lecker, 'Were the Jewish Tribes', 52–5, 57; M. Lecker, 'King Ibn Ubayy and the *Quṣṣāṣ*', in H. Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden, 2003), 35–6.

57. Other sources that do mention al-Fiṭyawn and his *ius primae noctis* include al-Jāḥiẓ (attrib.), *Maḥāsin*, 282–3; Razīn ibn Muʿāwiya, *apud* al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:329–30; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 4:463; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 1:656–7. Ibn al-Kalbī (*Jamharat al-nasab*, 620) attributes this to Muryad/Mazyad ibn Zayd ibn al-Ḥārith ibn al-Fiṭyawn.

58. This *Akhbār al-Yaman* professes to be the text of a conversation between the long-lived expert on pre-Islamic lore ʿAbīd ibn Sharya and the Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–80). This it is almost certainly not, but it is more difficult to say what it is; for a discussion—in which it is suggested, not wholly convincingly, that the work must pre-date the end of Umayyad rule in the mid-second/eighth century—see A. Cheddadi, *Les arabes et l'appropriation de l'histoire: Émergence et premiers développements de l'historiographie musulmane jusqu'au ii^e/viii^e siècle* (Arles, 2004), 36–67.

to him in his main narrative of this affair. Instead, he tells his readers simply that Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān sent a messenger to Abū Jubayla, the Ghassanid king in Syria, to inform him of the circumstances of the Aws and the Khazraj in Medina, that is to say that the Jews rather than themselves controlled all the best property. When Abū Jubayla heard this, he said, 'By God! None of our people should ever settle in a town without taking full control of it'. This alone inspired Abū Jubayla to help them.[59]

(Pseudo-)ʿAbīd ibn Sharya, who is one of the authorities who has Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān seek assistance from Tubbaʿ rather than Abū Jubayla, does not mention al-Fiṭyawn either, although he had to deal with the question of the Jews' exercising *ius primae noctis* over Medina's Arab inhabitants:[60]

> Muʿāwiya said: It has come to me, ʿAbīd, that while the Jews were there the Khazraj with them had no power, to the extent that a man would marry a woman and he would not be able to join her until a Jew had [slept with] her first. They deprived them of their authority.
>
> [ʿAbīd] said: God forbid, Commander of the Faithful! What has come to you is wrong. The Jews there were submissive (*adhillāʾ*), and the Aws and the Khazraj were better protected and stronger than that. The Aws and the Khazraj removed them from Medina so that they settled in Khaybar. Never did a Jewish man have any power over a Khazrajī woman!

(Pseudo-)ʿAbīd's reaction to the suggestion implies that many found the Fiṭyawn story distasteful, because it demonstrated the weakness of the Aws and Khazraj; at least one other author claimed that al-Fiṭyawn could exercise *ius primae noctis* only over the Jewish inhabitants of Medina, and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) was certain that it was exercised over the Jews but less certain that the Aws and the Khazraj were ever subjected to it.[61] Razīn ibn Muʿāwiya (d. 524/1129 or 535/1140) suggests that al-Fiṭyawn wanted to exercise *ius primae noctis* over the Arabs of Medina but was unable to because Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān killed him first.[62] That the Fiṭyawn story might be problematic for the *anṣār* in the Islamic era is nicely demonstrated by some verses attributed to Rawḥ ibn Zinbāʿ al-Judhāmī (d. 84/703) or to Rawḥ's cousin, in which the *anṣār* are humiliated for giving up their women to al-Fiṭyawn.[63] This makes it all the more interesting that Ibn Zabāla included it in his own *Akhbār al-Madīna*.

59. Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī*, 22:111; see also 3:40, for al-Fiṭyawn's brief mention.
60. ʿAbīd ibn Sharya (attrib.), *Akhbār al-Yaman*, 464.
61. al-Jāḥiẓ (attrib.), *Maḥāsin*, 282; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 1:656–7.
62. *Apud* al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:329–30.
63. For the verses, see al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bighāl*, ed. ʿA.-S. M. Hārūn in *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1384–99/1964–79), 2:359; Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī*, 9:230–1; Lecker, 'Were the Jewish Tribes', 57. On Rawḥ, who aided the Umayyads in the campaigns against Medina and Mecca during the second *fitna*, see esp. I. Hasson, 'Le chef judhāmite Rawḥ ibn Zinbāʿ', *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993), 95–122.

I suggest that he probably included this story to explain the idolatrous Arabs' taking control of the city from the monotheist Jews. For Ibn Zabāla, the Jews forfeited their right to control of the town through their leader's sinning, and this justified the Arabs' takeover.[64] The monotheist Jews had controlled the town until they became unworthy of that control, and then the Aws and the Khazraj took over until the Prophet came. The idea that divine providence was at work is conveyed by Ibn Zabāla's assertion that before al-Fiṭyawn the Arabs' inferior position was 'as God wished'. Michael Lecker has shown that this schematic presentation of Medina's pre-Islamic history—Jewish control passing to Arab control through one event—is almost certainly inaccurate, but the fact that the balance of power between Arabs and Jews on the eve of the *hijra* was complex was probably not of concern to Ibn Zabāla.[65] That Ibn Zabāla wanted to justify the Aws's and the Khazraj's taking control of the city from the Jews may also explain another notable discrepancy between his account and Abū al-Faraj's. Abū al-Faraj says that after Abū Jubayla had defeated the Jews, killed many of them, and ensured that the Aws and the Khazraj were in control of Medina's best properties, Mālik ibn al-'Ajlān devised a plan to kill even more of the Jews.[66] For Ibn Zabāla, this was perhaps too much, as it might have threatened the legitimacy of the actions of the Aws and the Khazraj.

I do not think that this interpretation of Ibn Zabāla's material on pre-Islamic Medina reads too much into the extant citations. Several of Ibn Zabāla's reports differ significantly from other scholars'—we have seen this concerning his discussions of al-Fiṭyawn and Tubba'—and this requires explanation. Neither is it going too far to suggest that Ibn Zabāla highlighted monotheism in pre-Islamic Medina, through his discussion of the town's Jewish inhabitants, and to have buried the fact that the Aws and the Khazraj were believed to have been idolaters before the *hijra*. This is all the more notable because another historian of Medina, one of Ibn Zabāla's students, 'Umar ibn Shabba (d. 262/876), provided a detailed discussion of idolatry in pre-Islamic Medina.[67] Elsewhere, Ibn Zabāla also displays a keen desire to highlight the merits of his hometown. For example, he is cited as including in his work a tradition ascribed to the Prophet that 'Medina is better than Mecca'.[68] We can safely assume that this same desire extended to his discussion of Medina's pre-Islamic history.

64. The Jews' losing their status as God's chosen people because of their sinfulness is a common theme in Muslim scholars' apologetics and polemics; for discussion, see, e.g., J. D. McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, 6 vols. (Leiden, 2001–6), s.v. 'Jews and Judaism' (U. Rubin).

65. Lecker, 'Were the Jewish Tribes'; Lecker, 'King Ibn Ubayy', esp. 35–6, on al-Fiṭyawn.

66. Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī*, 22:114.

67. On this, see M. Lecker, 'Idol Worship in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)', *Le Muséon* 106 (1993), 331–46. It is strange that this discussion of Medina's idols appears to have come from Ibn Shabba's lost history of Mecca—the passage in question is preserved only by the later scholar al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), in *al-Khabar 'an al-bashar*—but his history of Medina is only partially extant and may also have included this discussion.

68. Al-Marāghī, *Taḥqīq al-nuṣra*, 14.

The Sources of Information on pre-Islamic Medina

I have argued above that Ibn Zabāla paid careful attention to the way in which he presented Medina's pre-Islamic history. I will conclude with a brief investigation of the types of sources he may have had at his disposal for this presentation. We can rule out any suggestion that he might have fabricated his accounts. Much of the narrative (as opposed to topographical) material is not unique to Ibn Zabāla. Several later sources, such as Ibn Rusta and al-Bakrī, almost certainly based their brief discussions of pre-Islamic Medina on Ibn Zabāla's account, but others provide many comparable (if significantly different) versions of the same stories, without naming Ibn Zabāla as a source. The best example of this is probably Abū al-Faraj's *Aghānī*; Abū al-Faraj provides an *isnād* (line of transmission) for his discussion of the settlement of the Jews and the Aws and the Khazraj in Medina that does not include Ibn Zabāla. Furthermore, a few of the citations appear to have had certain parallels (if with significant differences) in works older than Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna*; we have already discussed the account of Mālik ibn al-ʿAjlān in the possibly second-/eighth-century *Akhbār al-Yaman*, and Ibn Isḥāq's *Kitāb al-Mubtadaʾ*, the introductory section to his biography of Muḥammad, is another example.[69] This all suggests that Ibn Zabāla may have modified the material that came his way but that he did not make it all up from scratch.

This is no place for a full investigation of the sources; such a project would, in any case, be difficult for Ibn Zabāla's *Akhbār al-Madīna*, because his work has not itself survived. Instead, I will use a brief discussion of the types of sources that may have been available to Ibn Zabāla to draw some tentative conclusions about his presentation of pre-Islamic Medina.

An interesting feature of Ibn Zabāla's narrative material, at least that concerning Medina's Jews, is the distant relationship it bears to Biblical and later Jewish accounts. Ibn Zabāla provides another example corroborating Jacob Lassner's observation that '[a] salient characteristic of Muslim historiography was the manner in which the faithful fully appropriated the Jewish past as part of their own historical experience and world-view'.[70] Modern scholars using some of the sources with accounts similar to Ibn Zabāla's on pre-Islamic Medina (especially Abū al-Faraj's *Aghānī*) have already noted a link with Biblical materials. For example, Reinhart Dozy, in the mid-nineteenth century, drew

69. That Ibn Isḥāq provided the account of Tubbaʿ at Medina, see above, n. 46. He also seems to have known of at least one of the reports of the inscriptions on Jammāʾ Umm Khālid; see G. D. Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia SC, 1989), 210–11.

70. J. Lassner, 'Time, Historiography, and Historical Consciousness: The Dialectic of Jewish-Muslim Relations', in Benjamin H. Hary et al. (eds.), *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction* (Leiden, 2000), 2.

attention to the parallel between the story of Moses sending an army to destroy all the Amalekites in the Ḥijāz and the account of Samuel's order to Saul to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15).[71] In the Moses/Amalekites version found in several Arabic sources, the army leaves a son of the Amalekite king alive because he is so handsome that they could not bring themselves to kill him; in the Biblical narrative it is unclear (to me at least) why Saul let the Amalekite king Agag live.[72] Likewise, Ibn Zabāla's account of Aaron's death is, in many ways, consistent with other legends that developed in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions—notably the fact that Moses had to call Aaron to his death whilst they are alone together on a mountain—although as far as I am aware Ibn Zabāla was the principal source for the idea that Aaron died on Uḥud, just north of Medina.[73]

Much of the context of this Biblical material has been significantly altered, and many details have been changed. Ibn Zabāla's 'Biblical chronology' is notably muddled—for example, he appears to have David precede Moses—and internally inconsistent. He has Moses die before the conquering Israelite army returns from the Ḥijāz but then says that Jews were already in Medina when Moses and Aaron came to Uḥud for the latter's death.[74] All this is not particularly significant, because many scholars have shown that, as Biblical materials came increasingly to be used as a source by Islamic scholars, many of their features were heavily altered.[75] I will not, therefore, dwell on the numerous variations of Biblical materials apparent in Ibn Zabāla's account of pre-Islamic Medina.

It is possible that when Muslim scholars such as Ibn Zabāla discussed Medina's pre-Islamic history they used stories and legends that had already been circulating in the town earlier, maybe even in pre-Islamic times.[76] It is very

71. Dozy, *Die Israeliten*, 54.

72. There also appears to be a similar parallel in an account of Joab's destruction of the Amalekites during David's reign; see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. H. Szold and P. Radin, 7 vols. (Philadelphia, 1909–38; reprinted 1968), 4:98–101.

73. For other traditions of Aaron's death, see esp. Num. 20:22–9; H. Schwarzbaum, 'Jewish, Christian, Moslem and Falasha Legends of the Death of Aaron, the High Priest', *Fabula* 5 (1962), 185–227. Philby notes that, in his day, a small building, known as the Qubbat Hārūn, could be visited on Uḥud, although it was not one of the usual pilgrim sites; H. StJ. B. Philby, *A Pilgrim in Arabia* (London, 1946), 79.

74. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafā' al-wafā*, 1:296, 300.

75. Among the studies of this phenomenon, see H. Schwarzbaum, *Biblical and Extra-Biblical Legends in Islamic Folk-Literature* (Walldorf-Hessen, 1982); C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm* (Leiden, 1996); and U. Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'ān: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image* (Princeton, 1999).

76. Serjeant has suggested that some of the reports about the Jews of Medina were first circulated by the Jews; see his 'The *Sunnah Jāmi'ah*, Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the *Taḥrīm* of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-Called "Constitution of Medina"', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978), 2–3.

unlikely that there will ever be positive evidence for this, but it is what we should expect. It is precisely what Muslim scholars in other, better documented regions were doing; a good example is the use by Iraqi and Iranian historians of the (originally Middle Persian) *Khwadāynāmag* traditions in writing the history of pre-Islamic Iran.[77] It is possible that the various groups in Medina's history—Jews, the pre-Islamic Aws and Khazraj, and the Muslims—each left their mark on the town's local historiography.

Even if this is the case, what has come down to us through historians such as Ibn Zabāla is very much a late-second-century/early-ninth-century Muslim's presentation of these stories and legends. David Day has recently suggested that 'the history of most societies can be best understood when they are seen as part of a never-ending struggle, in a world of shifting boundaries, to make particular territories their own'.[78] He sees the history of various regions of the world as one of a succession of 'supplanting societies', each having to legitimise and justify their removal of their predecessors, sometimes appropriating their predecessors' own histories to do so. Although most of Day's discussion focuses on the expansion of the European colonial powers, beginning in the fifteenth century, it is possible to see Medina's history in this way as well. After all, the basic picture of various Jewish and Arab tribes and clans struggling for power in pre-Islamic Medina, followed by the establishment of Islamic rule (whatever that meant in the early-to-mid-seventh century) in the town after the Prophet's *hijra* is still going strong. Ibn Zabāla himself conveniently describes Medina's history as a succession of 'supplanting societies':[79]

> In pre-Islamic times (*fī al-jāhiliyya*) Yathrib [i.e., Medina] was called Ghalaba [lit. 'conquest']. The Jews descended upon the Amalekites and conquered it from them (*ghalabathum ʿalayhā*); the Aws and the Khazraj descended upon the Jews and conquered it from them; the *aʿājim* [non-Arabs] descended upon the *muhājirūn* [i.e., the Muslim emigrants from Mecca] and conquered it from them.

Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār (d. 256/870), a student of Ibn Zabāla, transmitted this report and added, before the final clause about the *aʿājim*, 'The *muhājirūn* descended upon the Aws and the Khazraj and conquered them'.[80]

Medina, despite being the 'Prophet's City' and despite some scholars' attempts to depict it as a town simply waiting for God's Messenger to save it from

77. On the complicated question of how *Khwadāynāmag* material was transmitted in various ways to Muslim authors, see Z. Rubin, 'Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and the Account of Sasanian History in the Arabic Codex Sprenger 30', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005), 52–93.

78. D. Day, *Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others* (Oxford, 2008), 7.

79. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafā*, 1:79.

80. Ibid., 1:80. For the possible significance of the difference between these two versions, see Hasson, 'Contributions', 32–3.

itself, was not originally a Muslim town. Medina's local historians may have been fond of the saying that, 'All the [other] towns were conquered by the sword, but Medina was conquered by the Qur'ān'.[81] Nonetheless, the town was conquered, albeit peacefully, and Muslims of the following decades and centuries sought to provide it with a new, more suitable pre-Islamic past. It is understandable that, to do so, they would have sought to build upon and adapt the historical material of their predecessors in the town, the Jews and the pre-Islamic Aws and Khazraj. However, we should also expect that only those legends and reports that served the purposes of the latest supplanters—the Muslims—would be used for this purpose. Sarah Savant reminds us that '[i]ntellectual property is one of the most notoriously difficult properties to control';[82] the Jews may not have been so effectively expelled from the Ḥijāz in the mid-first/seventh century as later Muslim scholars liked to suggest, but they were no longer in a position to prevent the recasting of their history in Medina.[83] The Aws and the Khazraj, of course, were different, and it is no surprise that we can detect a much clearer pro-*anṣār* Medinan historiography. Nonetheless, I think we can suppose that any pre-Islamic Medinan-Arab accounts that were useless to later Muslims would also have been dropped. Ibn Zabāla, whose pride in being a Medinan is evident, wrote a Muslim's history for other Muslims, not only for other Muslims who were aware that Medina was the city of their Prophet, but also for other Muslims who should have been aware that it was one of the most significant cities in the Muslim world. This did not only require emphasis on the Islamic credentials of Medina and its inhabitants, but also fashioning a meritorious and relevant pre-Islamic history for them out of the available material.

81. For example, Ibn al-Najjār, *al-Durra al-thamīna fī ta'rīkh al-Madīna*, ed. M. Z. M. ʿAzab (Cairo, 1416/1995), 45. Ibn Zabāla is said to have transmitted this *ḥadīth* himself; see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 25:64–5.

82. Savant, 'Isaac', 5.

83. For further discussion of the continued existence of Jewish communities in the Ḥijāz after the mid-seventh century AD, see Newby, *History*, 97–108.

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Topoi and Topography in the Histories of al-Ḥīra

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Arabic historiography of the ʿabbāsid period is a heady mix of lore, legend, eyewitness accounts, inherited historical memory, archival material, native testimony, and—it should be said—a certain amount of logical interpolation. In the case of al-Ḥīra—a city in southern Iraq, near the Euphrates and the Islamic-era city of Kufa—it is clear that the historical reimagining of the city was strongly influenced by the ancient buildings still visible at the site. In the arena of ʿAbbāsid-era historiography, the archaeology of the material site fought for precedence against historical memory and the interests of a contemporary political teleology, as well as a highly developed and self-conscious ethos inherited from Ḥīran culture itself. Many scholars have contributed to the study of this paramount methodological quandary in the Arabo-Islamic historiographical tradition, focusing primarily on the interaction between historical memory and contemporary ideological needs, but this essay will show that the case of al-Ḥīra demonstrates the important role played by surviving material conditions and the legacy of pre-existing, consciously manufactured systems of cultural image-making in the construction of a historiographical paradigm.[1]

'A manufactured system of image-making' is an admittedly sceptical definition of the process of identity formation. The essays that make up this volume treat this most modern of concerns—identity—and simultaneously

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1. I have benefited greatly from the challenging work of Julie Scott Meisami and three other scholars, Meir J. Kister, Michael Zwettler, and Thomas Sizgorich, whose excellent legacies are testaments to their memory.

undermine the caricature of reified identity we find in contemporary government censuses. Historians of pre-modern societies, and above all those with imperial orientations, have often discussed identity on an ethnic or sectarian plane—preserving the essentialism of race while avoiding charges of racism—and, in most contemporary domestic contexts, identity is treated in the same way. Even with the emergence of cosmopolitan identities arrayed along spectra of political sympathy, sexuality, gender, disability, diet, lifestyle, etc., the tendency to essentialise personal characteristics continues. These essays do not attempt to catalogue permutations of personal identity, rather they attempt to freeze moments of collective identity formation and interaction, and detail the ways in which individuals and communities formed their identities in relation to historical circumstances. In the contributions of Tillier and Omar, we get a snapshot of the way in which identity is constructed synchronically among different groups in the course of a rapid and exhilarating imperial expansion. In the essays by King and Munt, we are treated to an examination of diachronic identity, and the key role played by the historical other in the development of a community's mythical history.

In this chapter, I explore the confrontation of Arabo-Islamic literary culture (specifically as represented in fourth-sixth/tenth-twelfth-century texts) with the cultural legacy of a faded pre-Islamic urban centre. I will demonstrate that the ostensibly retrospective ethos of faded glory, which the Arabo-Islamic literary imagination attached to the city of al-Ḥīra, predates the fall of the Lakhmid capital and can be found in the extant traces of Ḥīran culture itself. Despite this antecedence, it is clear that the Ḥīran mood is also an exemplary illustration of the Islamic ʿAbbāsid Empire's conception of itself as a state and society. Al-Ḥīra's idiosyncratic and plural identities reflect a rare pre-Islamic cosmopolitanism, but they are, at the same time, undeniably the product of a vital and conscious process of hybrid identity formation within the ʿAbbāsid Empire.

Al-Ḥīra, the capital of the Lakhmid kingdom (c. fourth-seventh centuries AD) and the unparalleled Arab metropolis of the pre-Islamic era, holds an indisputably important place in the history of the Late Antique Near East,[2] but

2. It was also a see of the Church of the East, technically not a metropolitanate, from as early as the 5th century. See J. S. Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic times* (London and Beirut, 1979), 188–202. For an overview of the city's history, see G. Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Laḫmiden in al-Ḥîra: Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Berlin, 1899). Much of this history is derived from the account in al-Ṭabarī, the first scholarly Western examination of which was T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Leiden, 1879) and which is available in an annotated translation as part of the complete history of al-Ṭabarī in English: *The History of al-Ṭabarī*. Vol. 5, *The Sāsānids, the*

we know little about the city's society and its culture. The history of al-Ḥīra that has come down to us is the product of Islamic sources written in the early ʿAbbāsid period (second-fifth AH/eighth-eleventh centuries AD) and while they may incorporate much from earlier histories or from a shared body of communal knowledge with deep historical roots, this material is clearly a reworked and partially legendary representation of the lost city.

Accounts of al-Ḥīra can give us valuable insights into ʿAbbāsid historiography and the paramount role played by archaeology in the construction of historical memory. Here I examine the figure of al-Ḥīra in ʿAbbāsid-era Arabic literary culture and attempt to reconcile reports surrounding the Monastery of Hind (Dayr Hind) with the particular ethos of al-Ḥīra. Based on this exposition, I propose a counterintuitive paradigm for contextualising this project of historical reimagining and attempt to restore some of al-Ḥīra's long lost agency as the co-author—and not merely the subject—of its own legend.

Modern scholarship has generally agreed with the Arabo-Islamic historical sources that pre-Islamic Ḥīra differed somehow from coeval cities in the Arabian Peninsula. The famous monasteries in the Ḥīran hinterland and in other parts of the Near East, for example, appeared to combine different cultural and religious features and seem to have been—or at least in later sources are certainly said to have been—silos that represented different cultural values, sprinkled across the landscape. Al-Ḥīra, like these legendary monasteries, was host to a culture and religion different from that of other pre-Islamic Arab cities and was, in many respects, the greatest, in size and legacy, of these monastic silos of difference.

Al-Ḥīra was the capital of the Lakhmid kingdom, Arab vassals of the Sasanian empire. At certain points, this dynasty seemed to have had a great affinity for, and eventually converted to, Christianity.[3] Socially and culturally, the city

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Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany NY, 1999). ʿĀ. ʿAbd al-Ghanī, *Taʾrīkh al-Ḥīra fī al-jāhiliyya wa-l-Islām* (Damascus, 1993) summarises an impressively wide range of Arabic sources on the city. Isabel Toral-Niehoff has studied al-Ḥīra in great depth, and her article 'The ʿIbād of al-Ḥīra: An Arab Christian Community', in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, and M. Marx (eds.), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu* (Leiden, 2010), 323–48, is an excellent description of al-Ḥīra's unique social and cultural identity and how it related to the wider regional nexus of culture, commerce, and religion in Late Antiquity. Forthcoming publications that will be of great interest to students of al-Ḥīra include: I. Toral-Niehoff, *Al-Ḥīra. Eine arabische Kulturmetropole im spätantiken Kontext* (Leiden, 2012) and articles included in the collection edited by K. Dimitriev and I. Toral-Niehoff, *Religious Cultures of Late Antique Arabia* (Leiden, 2012). I regret not having been able to consult these for the present article.

3. The question of the ruling family's religious affiliation and conversion history has attracted some attention; see E. Hunter, 'The Christian Matrix of al-Hira', in *Controverses des Chrétiens dans l'Iran Sassanide*, ed. C. Jullien (Paris, 2008), 41–56, esp. 43.

was Christian, and the Arabo-Islamic literary tradition later represented the city as Christian.[4] Yet Christianity, and al-Ḥīra's religious identity as it appears in the later Islamic tradition's literary recasting of the city, appear to fulfil a role that was more ludic or evocative than realistic. Alongside the city's Christian cultural background, it was at the court of the Lakhmid kings that many of the most renowned pre-Islamic poets performed and where, we are told, a distinct musical tradition was forged.[5] This twinned difference—religious and cultural, Christian and urbane—forms the core of the Ḥīran ethos as presented in later Arabo-Islamic sources, though it may, of course, indeed reflect historical reality. This essay will not attempt to excavate traces of Ḥīran culture from beneath layers of later Arabo-Islamic representation, but rather to evaluate the figure of al-Ḥīra and examine one mythical episode set at a famous Ḥīran monastery after the Arab conquest.[6]

Foremost for the historical setting of the Ḥīran legend is the political background of the Lakhmid kingdom and its capital. The Lakhmids hold a significant position in pre-Islamic Arab political history for two reasons, their political organisation and their status as vassals of the Sasanian emperor. They are often paired with their rivals, the Ghassanids, vassals of the Byzantines, whose culture, society, and politics have not been nearly as well preserved, or reinvented, for us in later Arabo-Islamic sources. The dynastic city-state the Lakhmids ruled over in southern Iraq served as the link between the Sasanian empire, whose capital of Ctesiphon lay to the north, and the greater Arab lands stretching toward Syria and south through the Peninsula. Al-Ḥīra was also a political capital and perhaps the most urban Arab environment in the pre-Islamic period: it boasted a permanent urban settlement, with tribal encampments on its periphery. These two key features of social organisation distinguished al-Ḥīra from other pre-Islamic Arab cities. There is little historical evidence of how this relationship operated, but a close Lakhmid-Sasanian relationship is characteristic of later Arabo-Islamic accounts of the mythical history of al-Ḥīra and is of a significantly different nature from that of the Ghassanids and Byzantines.[7]

4. See J. M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne. Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq* (Beirut, 1968), which remains the most comprehensive study of al-Ḥira's place in Mesopotamian Christianity (3:203–30), as well as articles by E. Hunter (listed in the bibliography).

5. Note K. Dmitriev, *The Poetical School of al-Hīra. A Study on the Early Arabic Literary Tradition in its Late Antique Milieu* (forthcoming), which I have not seen.

6. For an account of the Islamic conquest of al-Ḥīra, an apparently peaceful surrender on terms, see al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, trans. P. K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State* (New York, 1916), 1:387 ff.

7. Understandably, the neo-Iranian identity formation project of Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāmah* does not pay similar attention to the close relationship between the Iranian empire and its Arab vassals.

The historiographical background to this bifurcation can be easily explained from the vantage point of an ʿAbbāsid historical context whose affinities for Persia and animosities toward Byzantium need no elaboration, but one should not assume that the story is simply a reflection of ʿAbbāsid realpolitik. It may be the result of better historical preservation, or more scholarly interest in Iranian history, but it is also the great advantage of the Ḥīran narrative that it is one act in the saga of the end of an empire. Al-Ḥīra in our sources is not simply a Sasanian vassal, but a Sasanian satellite, albeit one with an Arab lineage and culture, one which provides another perspective on the same parable of the empire laid low.

The Look of the Place

Al-Ḥīra made its greatest impact on early Islamic litterateurs and historians through its architectural heritage. This architectural legacy was the face of the city's fabled wealth and glory, and much Ḥīran mythical history takes architectural features present at the site as a starting point. Thus stories were constructed to reflect an archaeological and architectural reality in southern Iraq—a reality that, I would argue, came to dominate what historical memory may have survived. Consider, for example, the fascination of Arabo-Islamic literary culture with the Ḥīran landscape in the following poem by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1016). The poem is an elegy for the line of al-Nuʿmān ibn Māʾ al-Samāʾ that the poet is said to have recited at al-Ḥīra in Ṣafar 394/November-December 1003.[8] Confronting the ruined city, the poet asks after its famed rulers, echoing the conventional opening motif of classical Arabic poems.

[1] اينَ بانوكِ ايّها ٱلحِيرةُ ٱلبَيـــــــــــــــــضاءُ وَٱلمُوطِنونَ[9] مِنْكِ ٱلدِّيارا
[2] وَٱلأُولى شَقَّقوا ثراكِ مِنَ ٱلعُشْـــــــــــــــــبِ وَأجرَوا خِلالَكِ ٱلأنْهارا
[3] المُهيبونَ بالضُيوفِ إذا هَبَّـــــــــــــــــتْ شَمالاً وَٱلمُوقِدونَ ٱلنّارا
[4] كُلَّما باخَ ضَوْءُها أقْضَموها بالقُبَيْباتِ مَنْدَليّاً وَغارا
[5] رَبَطوا حَولَكِ ٱلحِيادَ وَخَطُّوا لَكِ مِنْ مَرْكَزِ ٱلعَوالي عِذارا
[6] وَحَمَوا أرْضَكِ ٱلحَوافِرَ حَتّى لَقَّبُوا أرْضَها خُدودَ ٱلعَذارا

8. This date is given in the heading of the poem (in the *khafīf* metre) in two manuscripts consulted (British Library MS Add. 25750, f. 115b, and Berlin MS Wetzstein II 240, ff. 119b–120a). The third manuscript consulted for the preparation of the Arabic text and translation (Berlin MS Petermann I 194, f. 83a) does not record any heading information. The poem is also found in the 1890–2 edition of the *Dīwān* (Beirut, al-Azharī ed.), 1:393 and the 1995 edition (Beirut, Faraḥāt ed. based on the 1890–2 edition), 1:467. It is also found in Zakī Mubārak's *ʿAbqariyyat al-Sharīf al-Raḍī* (Cairo, 1358/1939), 2:255–256. See the brief discussion of this and one other poem on al-Ḥīra in ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw, *al-Sharīf al-Raḍī: Ḥayātuhu wa-dirāsat shiʿrih* (Cairo, 1406/1986), 2:110–1. Al-Ḥulw's edition of the *Dīwān* (Baghdad, 1977) seems never to have been completed; the one volume that was printed does not include this poem. This is also true of Muḥammad Muḥī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's commentary on the *Dīwān* (n.p., 1949).

9. Reading *al-mūṭiʾūna* with British Library MS Add. 25750, Berlin MS Wetzstein II 240, and Berlin MS Petermann I 194, rather than with the printed editions.

[7]	لَمْ يَدَعْ مِنْكِ حادِثُ ٱلدَّهْرِ إِلّا	عِبَراً لِلعُيُونِ وَٱسْتِعْبارا
[8]	وَبَقايا مِنْ دارِساتِ طُلولٍ	خَبَّرَتْنا عَنْ أَهلِها ٱلأَخْبارا
[9]	عَبِقاتِ ٱلثَّرى كَأَنَّ عَلَيْها	لَطَمِيّينَ يَنْفُضونَ ٱلعِطارا
[10]	وَقِبابٍ كَأَنَّما رَفَعوا مِنْـــــــــــــــ	ـــــــــــــــها لِمُسْتَرْشِدِ ٱلظَّلامِ مَنارا[10]
[11]	عَقَدوا بَينَها وَبَينَ نُجومِ ٱلـــــــــــــ	ـــــــــــــأُفْقِ في[11] سالِفِ ٱللَّيالي جِوارا
[12]	اينَ عِقْبانُكِ ٱلحَواطِفُ حَلَّقْـــــــــــــ	ـــــــــــــنَ وَأَبْقَينَ عِنْدَكِ ٱلأَوْكارا
[13]	وَرِجالٌ مِثْلُ ٱلسُيوفِ[12] مَشَوا فيـــــــــ	ـــــــــكِ تَداعَوا قَوائماً وَشِفارا
[14]	حَبَّذا أَهلُكِ ٱلمُحِلّونَ أَهلاً	يَومَ بانوا وَحَبَّذا ٱلدّارُ دارا
[15]	لَمْ يَكونوا إِلّا كَرَكْبٍ تَأَنّى	بُرْهَةً في مُناخِهِ ثُمَّ سارا

1. Where are those who built you, O Ḥīra the White?
   And those who made your lands their home?
2. Those who cleaved green fields from fertile soil
   and caused rivers to flow through you;
3. Those who hailed guests when the north-wind blew;
   and those who kept the fires stoked.
4. Every time its flame faltered, they fed it [with fragrant wood
   of] Mandal[13] and of bay trees down at Qubaybāt.[14]
5. Their swift steeds they tied up around you and dragging their spears
   to where they planted them in the ground, traced a wispy beard o'er you.
6. They protected your lands against [enemies on] hoofs
   and thus your lands were called 'The Virgins' Cheeks'.[15]

The poem continues with a rumination on how cruel time has been to the city. This reflection is based almost entirely on architectural imagery and the figure of the ruined city.

7. The passing of time has left nothing in you
   but lessons for the eyes to be learned.
8. The traces of now abandoned campsites
   tell us of those who were here before.

10. In Berlin MS Wetzstein II 240, we find '*nahārā*' rather than '*manārā*'.

11. Reading *min* with British Library MS Add. 25750 and Berlin MS Petermann I 194 rather than with the printed editions.

12. Reading *al-usūd* with British Library MS Add. 25750 and Berlin MS Wetzstein II 240, rather than with Berlin MS Petermann I 194 and the printed editions.

13. Mandal, which is said to be in India, was renowned for its fragrant wood; See Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 5:209 and J-Cl. Chabrier, "Ūd', *EI*2.

14. This reference is unclear to me, but there is the possibility that it is indeed a toponym as given in the note to the 1890–2 edition of the *Dīwān*. In Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's *Muʿjam al-buldān*, we find a few places bearing the name *qubaybāt*, of which 'a watering hole in the lands of Banī Tamīm' is the most plausible, if tenuous, explanation (4:308). Another reading suggests that *qubaybāt* refers to the wood—perhaps, for example, its shape—but I have found no attestations for this.

15. Epithet of al-Kufa: *khadd al-ʿadhrā'* (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 4:490).

9. The fertile land retains its scent as if
   perfumers had spread perfume upon it.
10. The domes that were raised up as if to be
    beacons for those trying to find their way in the dark.
11. They sealed—between [you] and the stars
    in the sky—a pact of protection on nights gone by.
12. Where have your snatching eagles gone? Flown
    away and left you with [nothing more than] nests.
13. And those men, [tall and upright] like swords, who once walked in you,
    joining [in arms] with sword hilts and blades.[16]
14. Oh how lovely were your people who once dwelt here
    on the day they left! Oh how lovely the abodes that once were!
15. They were much like a rider, dallying a moment
    at the camel's resting place, and then just carrying on.

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was certainly one of the most educated men of his day, and this poem—as well as two others he wrote in a similar vein on al-Ḥīra and al-Madā'in (Ctesiphon) respectively—demonstrate not only the importance of poetry in Arabo-Islamic historiography, but also the reimagining and repurposing of a cautionary pre-Islamic historical legend in the elite culture of a mature empire at the turn of the fourth/tenth century.

Another important aspect of the Ḥīran ethos is the city's long association with Christianity in the pre-Islamic (to Muslims, pagan) period.[17] Al-Ḥīra's Christian ethos is implicitly reflected in its connection to the catholically broad *ubi sunt* motif in pre-Islamic and Arabo-Islamic literature, and it is explicitly highlighted in the life and work of al-Ḥīra's most famous poet, ʿAdī ibn Zayd, a Christian Arab (*ʿībādī*). Isabel Toral-Niehoff and others have drawn attention to the Christian themes in ʿAdī's poetry, and his versified account of the fall from Edenic grace is remarkable.[18] Yet we should not overlook the place of

16. The printed editions of the *Dīwān* have 'leonine men', which is a nice corollary to the eagles of the previous line, but as this line continues with the imagery of weaponry, I have preferred the reading of the manuscript. The verb *tadāʿaw* in this line is peculiar, as it is usually used to mean a crumbling (of, e.g., a building). When paired with the preposition *ʿalā* it can mean 'to unite against'—see J. G. Hava, *Al-Faraid: Arabic-English Dictionary*, 5th ed. (Beirut, 1982)—or, without the preposition, 'to draw near an enemy'; based on the context, this seems the most appropriate reading.

17. See E. Hunter, 'The Christian Matrix of al-Hira'.

18. See K. Dimitriev, 'An Early Christian Arabic Account of the Creation of the World', in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, and M. Marx (eds), *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu* (Brill, 2009). See also I. Toral-Niehoff, 'Eine Arabische Poetische Gestaltung des Sündenfalls', in Hartwig et al. (eds.), *Im Vollen Licht der Geschichte. Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und der Beginn einer historisch-kritischen Koranforschung* (Würzburg, 2008), 235–56; and J. Horovitz, 'Adi Ibn Zeyd, The Poet of Hira', *Islamic Culture* 4 (1930), 31–69; F. Gabrieli, "Adī Ibn Zaid: Il poeta di al-Ḥīrah', *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, ser. 8, vol. 3 (1948), 81–96; al-ʿAẓma, *ʿAdī ibn Zayd al-ʿAbādī* [*sic*] (Beirut, 1960), esp. 19–24; al-Hāshimī, *ʿAdī ibn Zayd al-ʿIbādī*; al-Shaṭṭī, *Shuʿarāʾ imārat al-ḥīra fī al-ʿaṣr al-jāhilī*, 89–149; L. Cheikho, *Kitāb Shuʿarāʾ al-naṣrāniyya* (Beirut, 1890), 2:439–74.

Christianity in ʿAdī's mythical biography, especially because it is at the heart of al-Ḥīra's legendary history. I will discuss al-Ḥīra's monasteries and their importance in the topographical imaginary of the city in my treatment of the story of Hind's monastery, but we can examine one facet of the history of al-Ḥīra as it relates to the city's Christian background, in the story of the Lakhmid king turned ascetic related in the biography of ʿAdī ibn Zayd contained in the great fourth/tenth-century *Book of Songs* (*Kitāb al-Aghānī*).[19]

The story, which is traced back to Ibn al-Kalbī, an authority on pre-Islamic Arab history and the author of a lost monograph on the monasteries of al-Ḥīra, touches on the twin strands of cultural background that underpin the history of al-Ḥīra—decadence and Christian asceticism.[20] The king al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir and the poet-cum-confidante ʿAdī ibn Zayd are out hunting one day, mimicking an important ritual of Sasanian kingship, when the Christian poet decides to use features of the landscape to alert the king to the fate of those who seek luxury and turn their backs on God.[21] In one version of the story, when the king and the poet pass by a tree, the poet turns to the king and says, 'My lord, do you know what this tree is saying?' When the king acknowledges that he does not, ʿAdī relates the tree's versified wisdom:

Rubba rakbin qad anākhū ʿindanā
yashrabūna l-khamra bi-l-māʾi l-zulālī
ʿaṣafa l-dahru bi-him fa-nqaraḍū
wa-kadhāka l-dahru ḥālan baʿda ḥālī.[22]

So many riders who once halted their camels beside us,
And drank wine mixed with water pure,
Fate has turned against them and withdrawn its favour.
That's fate for you, though; it's changing all the time.

They carry on past the tree and come to a graveyard whereupon ʿAdī asks the king the same question: 'My lord, do you know what this graveyard is saying?' Once more the king says no and ʿAdī relates the graveyard's message:

Ayyuha l-rakbu l-mukhibbū
-na ʿalā l-arḍi l-mujiddūn
fa-kamā antumu kunnā
wa-kamā naḥnu takūnūn.[23]

19. On which, see H. Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the Author's Craft in Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī's Kitāb al-Aghānī* (London, 2003).

20. On Ibn al-Kalbī, see Atallah, 'al-Kalbī. II. Hishām ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī', *EI2*.

21. This story is found in Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī [al-Iṣfahānī], *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (ed. I. al-Abyārī, Cairo, 1969–79), 2:514, 551–8.

22. Metre: *al-ramal*.

23. Metre: *al-ramal*.

Hey, you! Trotting over land,
Kicking up the dust;
We were once like you,
And you'll end up like us.

No slouch himself, the king soon confronts ʿAdī about the game he has been playing and tells him to come out with it: 'The tree and the graveyard can't talk. I know you're trying to warn me, so what's the path whereby one can find salvation (*al-najāh*)?' The answer ʿAdī gives is simple and thoroughly expected; it is a Christian version of the message the Muslim community would have been familiar with:

'Leave off the worship of idols, worship God, and follow the religion of Jesus, son of Mary'.

'Will this guarantee salvation (*a-wafā hādhā al-najāh*)?' the king asks.

'Yes', replied ʿAdī, and the king became a Christian that very day.

This is not the only version of a Lakhmid king's conversion associated with ʿAdī b. Zayd. It is not even the only version we find in his biography in *The Book of Songs* (*Kitāb al-Aghānī*). Moreover, it is in the permutations of this story that we can begin to uncover salient aspects of the nature of historiography about al-Ḥīra and its narrative motivation. In another version of the story of the king's conversion, the king and ʿAdī ibn Zayd are again out admiring the sights, when they pass a graveyard whose message of foreboding keeps the king up at night. When he next goes out, they pass by the same graveyard, and ʿAdī asks him whether he knows what the graveyard is saying. He says, 'No', of course, and ʿAdī gives voice to the graveyard's warning verse:

Man raʾānā fa-li-yuḥaddith nafsahū
annahū mūfin ʿalā qarni zawālī
wa-ṣurūfu l-dahri lā yabqā lahā
wa-li-mā taʾtī bihī ṣummu l-jabālī
rubba rakbin qad anākhū ʿindanā
yashrabūna l-khamra bi-l-māʾi l-zulālī
wa-l-abārīqu ʿalayhā fudumun
wa-jiyādu l-khayli tardī fī l-jilālī
ʿamirū dahran bi-ʿayshin ḥasanin
āminī dahrihimū ghayra ʿijālī
thumma ʾaḍḥaw ʿaṣafa l-dahru bihim
wa-kadhāka l-dahru yūdī bi-l-rijālī
wa-kadhāka l-dahru yarmī bi-l-fatā
fī ṭilābi l-ʿayshi ḥālan baʿda ḥālī.[24]

24. Metre: *al-ramal*.

He who sees us should remind himself
He's on the verge of fading away.
Not even unyielding mountains can endure
The vicissitudes of time and all that's their trade.
So many riders who once halted their camels beside us,
And drank wine mixed with pure water, they'd
Had cloths on their wine-jugs for straining,
and prize horses dressed in brocade.
They spent a while living the good life,
trusting their fate, patient, blasé,
But then fate turned cruel to them;
that's simply how with men it does away.
And how fate throws one thing then another
at men trying to get on in this vile parade.[25]

These poems are all examples of a well-established genre of *ubi sunt* and *waʿẓ* (exhortatory) poetry in Arabic, but they also reflect an essential theme of the Ḥīran legend—transience—of which we will see other examples.[26] As the story progresses, we can see how the conversion narrative not only reflects the Christian ethos of the mythical capital but is tied directly to its visible archaeological reality, a reality that came to dominate surviving historical memory and became the prime focus of the city's reconstructed mythical history. The king converts after this episode, after seeing the light, as it were, and becomes a wandering ascetic. His descendants, too, convert to Christianity and, the story explains, 'They built churches (*biyaʿ*) and monastic cells (*ṣawāmiʿ*) and Hind [daughter of] al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir built the monastery on the outskirts of al-Kufa known as Hind's Monastery (Dayr Hind); when the Sasanian emperor (*kisrā*) imprisoned her father al-Nuʿmān al-Aṣghar [i.e., the Younger] [who] subsequently died, Hind devoted her life to God (*tarahhabat*), dressed in haircloth, and entered the monastery where she cloistered herself (*wa-aqāmat fī dayrihā mutarahhiba*^{tan}) until her death, and it is there that she was buried'. I will return to the specific nexus of history, architecture, and culture associated with Hind's Monastery, but we can already begin to see how the mythical history of the city takes its inspiration from an archaeological and architectural reality in southern Iraq and how it combines strands of transmitted historical memory, poetry and literary artefacts, invention, and interpretation.

25. This poem has also been translated in F. Gabrieli, 'Adī Ibn Zaid, il poeta di al-Ḥīrah', and R. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London and New York, 2001).

26. ʿAdī ibn Zayd was the exemplar of this genre in all of pre-Islamic poetry, but other Ḥīran poets were associated with it as well. See al-Ḍuḥayyān, *al-Bīʾa al-adabiyya* (Riyadh, [2004–5]), 367–77.

A general account of al-Ḥīra is given in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's (d. 626/1229) *Muʿjam al-buldān*, a biographical dictionary. The aspect of this entry most interesting for our analysis is his discussion of al-Ḥīra's extant architectural features. Al-Ḥamawī explains that al-Ḥīra's epithet, 'the White', refers to 'the quality of its buildings (*ḥusn al-ʿimāra*).[27] Even discussions of the etymology of the city's name refer to its settled nature: in the pre-modern Arabo-Islamic sources it is said that the city was originally an enclosure (*ḥayr*),[28] and more recently, A. F. L. Beeston showed that the name 'is comparable with Syriac *ḥirtā* "encampment", and [that] the locality was no doubt so named from having originally been a camp'.[29] The discussion of the city's divided society—consisting of Arab tribes in the city's vicinity who 'lived in tents' and the Christian Arabs (*ʿibādiyyūn*) who 'lived in the city and built it up'—can be read as the reflection of an urban-pastoral divide in southern Iraq.[30] Archaeological evidence from the few staccato expeditions in the area is incomplete but can perhaps give a vague impression of what the city was like. The preliminary archaeological investigations verify the historical accounts and literary evidence and testify to al-Ḥīra's urban character.[31] Art historians have debated al-Ḥīra's influence on later ʿAbbāsid architectural styles, and, although the issue is far from settled, it is clear that Ḥīran architecture was developed enough to have been at least a plausible candidate for a model.[32] Archaeological evidence has also emphasised al-Ḥīra's Christian heritage, by locating at least two churches with surviving frescoes and plaster crosses, in addition to Syriac inscriptions.[33]

In addition to history and archaeology, poetry and literary culture are important ingredients in the mythical history of the city, as can be seen from the important role poetry played in constructing the architecturally informed

27. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:328.

28. Ibid., 2:329.

29. A. F. L. Beeston, rev. I. Shahîd, 'al-Ḥīra', *EI2*; see also C. E. Bosworth, 'Ḥira', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

30. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut, 1956), 2:330–1. On the ʿIbād, see I. Toral-Niehoff, 'The ʿIbād of al-Ḥīra: An Arab Christian Community in Late Antique Iraq' and her forthcoming monograph.

31. See D. Talbot Rice, 'Hira', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 19 (1932), 254–68; D. Talbot Rice, 'The Oxford Excavations at Hira, 1931', *Antiquity* 6 (1932), 276–91; D. Talbot Rice, 'The Oxford Excavations at Ḥīra', *Ars Islamica* 1 (1934), 51–73; M. D. Roaf and J. N. Postgate, 'Excavations in Iraq, 1979–80', *Iraq* 43 (1981), 167–98, esp. 180. Erica Hunter has used these brief archaeological reports to sketch the Christian character of the city in the period of the Muslim conquest; see her 'The Christian Matrix of al-Hira'. See also ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Ḥamīd's '*Āthār madīnat al-Ḥīra al-ʿArabiyya*', *Bayn al-nahrayn* 67 (1989), 3–13.

32. For an overview of this long-running debate, see T. Leisten, 'Mshatta, Samarra, and al-Hira: Ernst Herzfeld's theories concerning the development of the Hira-Style revisited', in A. C. Gunter and S. R. Hauser (eds.), *Ernst Herzfeld and the Development of Near Eastern Studies, 1900–1950* (Leiden, 2005), 371–84.

33. Talbot Rice, 'Hira', 265; on Syriac inscriptions from the vicinity of al-Ḥīra, see E. Hunter, 'Syriac Inscriptions from al Hira', *Oriens Christianus* 80 (1996), 66–81.

narrative of the city.[34] It is true that poetry and literary culture are prominent throughout pre-modern Islamicate history, but the historical Ḥīra was, like its better-known legendary counterpart, a centre of vibrant literary production that differed notably from that of other Arab cultural centres in the pre-Islamic period.[35] It is also true that Ḥīran literary culture was more relatable to that of ʿAbbāsid urban centres in which the mythical history of the city was drafted, and it is this important aesthetic bond that perhaps explains the prominence afforded to Ḥīran literary culture in the mythical history of the city as devised by ʿAbbāsid-era writers.[36] We can, for example, see this important feature of the Ḥīran ambiance reflected in the report about the musician Ḥunayn ibn Balūʿ al-Ḥīrī in the *Book of Songs* (*Kitāb al-Aghānī*).[37] Ḥunayn lived in the Umayyad period and was, as his name suggests, linked to the cultural milieu of al-Ḥīra. A Christian like ʿAdī ibn Zayd, the figure of Ḥunayn the musician reflects the twin strands of cultural sophistication and luxury that are fundamental to the mythological history of the city. He is said to have been introduced to music when he was adopted by the notable families of al-Ḥīra to whom he used to deliver fruit and sweet basil.[38] That he was a Christian, a purveyor of luxury goods, and good-looking, as well as good company are attributes of Ḥunayn's character that reflect the conventional image of the city in later sources. Let us examine one section of the report about Ḥunayn from the *Book of Songs* that foregrounds this very issue.[39]

> It is said that some of the governors of al-Kufa used to deride al-Ḥīra in the Umayyad period, so one of its citizens—a clever (*ʿāqil*), witty *(ẓarīf)* man—said to them 'Would you find fault with a town that was the stuff of proverbs (*bihā yuḍrab al-mathal*) in both the age of ignorance and the age of Islam?'

34. Two books treat the subject of Ḥīran literary culture: Ibrāhīm ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḍuḥayyān, *al-Bīʾa al-adabiyya fī al-Ḥīra fī ẓilāl dawlat al-manādhira* (Riyadh, [2004/05]) and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Shaṭṭī, *Shuʿarāʾ imārat al-Ḥīra fī al-ʿaṣr al-jāhilī* (Cairo, 1998).

35. The only empirical evidence we have that suggests the existence of different schools in pre-Islamic poetry is found in D. Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse: History and Theory of ʿarūḍ* (Leiden, 2000). Frolov's study has not settled the question; see B. Paoli's dissenting review in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003), 400–12. Since the work of von Grunebaum (see the next note), the more arduous challenge of elucidating this difference by analysing literary style has only had one recent taker, James Montgomery, 'The Deserted Encampment in Ancient Arabic Poetry: A Nexus of Topical Comparisons', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 40 (1995), 283–316.

36. The classic study of the emergence of an urban style in ʿAbbāsid poetry is G. von Grunebaum, 'Aspects of Arabic Urban Literature Mostly in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', *Al-Andalus* 20 (1955), 259–81.

37. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 2:759–76.

38. Ibid., 2:763.

39. Ibid., 2:769–770.

When asked what the city should be praised for, the man lists its advantages:

> ʿFor its good air and sweet water, the pleasant hinterland suitable for the padded feet of camels and ostriches and cloven-hoofed animals, the plain and the mountain, the desert and meadow (*bustān*), the land and sea, the home of kings and their picnic spot, where they lived and are buried. You went there—May God preserve you!—without much and came away with a great deal, [you] entered it lacking, and it made you rich'.

Tempted by this description, they ask him how they can experience these benefits for themselves, so the man invites them to a feast of delights, all of exclusively Ḥīran provenance, from the food and drink to the servants and entertainment—where Ḥunayn turns up—and they come to understand just what a paradise al-Ḥīra once was.

It followed logically that the city, a capital of luxury, must have been home to an equally rich culture, so the legend of al-Ḥīra depended on these indivisible strands of wealth, culture, and Christianity that allowed the city to realise its complete mythical form as a lost paradise. In the Arabic poetic tradition, Christian monasteries were sites of recreation associated chiefly with the Islamically illicit, but literarily commonplace, figure of wine—and sex—as in the following poem by ʿAdī ibn Zayd, which exemplifies this motif and its mythopoetic potential for Ḥīran history:[40]

Nādamtu fī l-dayri banī ʿAlqamā
ʿāṭaytuhum mashmūlatan ʿandamā
ka-ʾanna rīḥa l-miski min kaʾsihā
idhā mazajnāhā bi-māʾī l-samā.
ʿAlqama mā bāluka lam taʾtinā
amā–shtahayta l-yawma ʾan tanʿamā
an sarrahu l-ʿayshu wa-ladhdhātuhū
fa-l-yajʿala l-rāḥa lahū sullamā.

At the monastery, I drank with Banī ʿAlqama,
Presenting them with the reddest wine—
As if musk-scent rose up from the cup
When we mixed it with water from on high.
ʿAlqama, what keeps you from visiting?
Don't you long to live well while there's time?
Let him who's enjoyed life and all its delights
Build a stairway for himself out of wine.

40. Quoted in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:524. The metre is *al-sarīʿ*.

Hind and Her Monastery

This overview of al-Ḥīra's mythical history and its representation in fourth-sixth/tenth-twelfth-century sources brings us to an important episode in that history that seems to run counter to the general structure and tenor of Ḥīran stories. This story is set at the monastery of Hind bint al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir, a Lakhmid princess. According to one story, Hind cloistered herself in the monastery after her beloved husband ʿAdī ibn Zayd was executed by her father. The story of their love affair as recounted in the *Book of Songs* is an informative example of how later Arabo-Islamic literary sources imagined Ḥīran society and culture.[41]

They meet on a Christian festival day during the reign of al-Mundhir, Hind's grandfather, when they go to receive holy communion. Hind is eleven years old, and ʿAdī has come bearing a gift for the king from the Sasanian emperor (*kisrā*). ʿAdī espies Hind as they simultaneously enter the church, but her attention is diverted. Hind's female servants had seen ʿAdī approaching, but they say nothing to Hind for the sake, it is explained, of one of Hind's handmaids called Māriya. She was in love with ʿAdī but unsure of how to approach him. Hind sees ʿAdī looking at her and gets angry with her servants, even striking a few of them. ʿAdī, for his part, had already been smitten. A year passes, and all the while ʿAdī keeps his love a secret. After a year, the handmaid Māriya, thinking that Hind had got over her anger, tells Hind about a monastery and tells her to ask her mother for permission to go visit it. Her mother consents, and Māriya goes to tell ʿAdī the news. Handsome ʿAdī dresses in Persian finery and goes down to the monastery with a group of young men from al-Ḥīra. It is then that Hind, in turn, falls in love with him. Later, Māriya takes advantage of her role as go-between and asks ʿAdī to sleep with her. This he does in a tavern, another feature of the urban landscape common to the poetic-landscapes of pre-Islamic Ḥīra and ʿAbbāsid Baghdad. Hind and ʿAdī eventually marry, but the monastery does not figure in the story until after al-Nuʿmān has his son-in-law ʿAdī killed.

After ʿAdī's death, Hind cloisters herself in Dayr Hind (Hind's Monastery) where she lives on into the Islamic period.[42] The story of Hind's confrontation with the new Islamic political system is one of the most interesting, and discordant, episodes in the history of al-Ḥīra. The entry on this monastery in al-Shābushtī's (d. 388/988) *Book of Monasteries* (*Kitāb al-Diyārāt*) includes

41. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 2:546–9. A version of this story also appears in *The Thousand and One Nights*; cf. U. Marzolph and R. van Leeuwen, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara CA, 2004).

42. The classical Arabo-Islamic accounts of this monastery are collected in ʿAbd al-Ghanī, *Taʾrīkh al-Ḥīra*, 64–9.

three different versions of this story; a translation of this entry is appended below. The stories all share the same basic plot: a Muslim commander confronts Hind, who has survived to an old age within the confines of her monastery. In one version of the story, it is the caliph Muʿāwiya's (r. 41–60/661–80) governor in al-Kufa, al-Mughīra ibn Shuʿba (d. 48–51/668–71), who comes to Hind's monastery and asks to marry her. The version of this story in the *Book of Songs* displays all the sorts of details one would expect the ʿAbbāsid mind to ascribe to such a mythical scene in which two representatives of the pre-Islamic and Islamic, Persianate and peninsular Arab, Christian and Muslim ruling classes come face to face.[43] When al-Mughīra comes to Hind's monastery he asks permission to see her: an implicit acknowledgment of her continued high standing. Agreeing to see him, Hind spreads out a thick haircloth (*mis'ḥ*) for al-Mughīra to sit on. This hair carpet could be read as a subtle joke at the expense of al-Mughīra the Bedouin, coming, as it does, from the princess of an urban capital, but it is more likely a reflection of Hind's humbled position.[44] The contrast between its modesty and the proverbial luxury of al-Ḥīra is made all the more poignant by the presence of the Muslim conqueror seated upon it. Sitting upon this emblem of al-Ḥīra's degradation, al-Mughīra's admission that he has come to ask for Hind's hand in marriage only adds to the contrast between the kingdom's former glory and its presently vulnerable state.

Although it does reinforce the theme of al-Ḥīra's great fall from glory, Hind's reply demonstrates the extent to which the legend of the proud and powerful Ḥīran kingdom is kept alive, though separate from the new Arabo-Islamic political reality. 'By the Cross, if I thought there was the slightest beauty or youth left in me to make you want me, I'd have answered you', she says. 'But you just want to be able to [go to the] pilgrimage [or the pre-Islamic festivals] (*mawāsim*)[45] and say that you've won the kingdom of al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir and married his daughter! By the one you worship (*bi-ḥaqq maʿbūdika*), is that what you're after?' 'Yes, by God', he answers, but her reply is final: 'Well, tough luck! (*fa-lā sabīla ilayhi*)'. After his rejection, a dejected al-Mughīra leaves Hind's side, and the story concludes with some verses on Hind, supposedly composed by al-Mughīra:[46]

43. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 2:549–50.

44. This haircloth carpet can also be understood as an emblem of monasticism (see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, s. r. *m-s-ḥ*). That it also shares its root (*m-s-ḥ*) with the epithet of Christ, al-Masīḥ (Messiah), is surely a narratological lucky stroke. Cf. also—despite the anachronism—the modern Egyptian proverb: *khud il-aṣīla wa-law kānat ʿal-ḥaṣīra* ('Marry a well-born woman no matter how poor she may be [lit., even if she's on a reed mat]', M. Hinds and El-Said Badawi (eds), *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* (Beirut, 1986) 25, s. v. *aṣīl*.

45. See A. J. Wensinck, rev. C. E. Bosworth, 'Mawsim', *EI2*.

46. Metre: *al-kāmil*.

Adrakti mā mannaytu nafsiya khāliy[an]
li-llāhi darruki yā–bnata l-Nuʿmānī
fa-la-qad radadti ʿalā l-Mughīrati dhihnahū[47]
inna l-mulūka naqiyyatu l-adhʾhānī[48]
yā Hindu ḥasbuki qad ṣadaqti fa-ʾamsikī
fa-l-ṣidqu khayru maqālati l-insānī.

You realised what my soul hopes for when I'm alone;
God smile on you, O Daughter of Nuʿmān.
You got al-Mughīra thinking straight again;
The minds of kings are much purer than man's.
Hind, I feel you've told the truth, so carry on;
To be honest and truthful is to be the best that we can.

In another story about Hind's monastery, from Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's *Muʿjam al-buldān*, many of the details are different, but the important components of the story—the looming subtext of al-Ḥīra's lost glory, Christian culture, and a defiant Lakhmid princess—are all there.[49] In this version of the story, Hind builds her monastery to fulfil a vow she had made to God when her father was taken prisoner by the Sasanian emperor (*kisrā*) that she would build a monastery if God were to return her father. She built her monastery and took up residence there, and that is where she receives the Muslim conqueror Khālid ibn al-Walīd (d. 21/642), who comes to tell her that, if she converts to Islam, he will marry her to a noble Muslim (*rajul sharīf Muslim*).[50] Her feisty reply to the offer this time incorporates a new level of disdain for the suggestion that she abandon her faith:

> As for religion, the only one I want is the religion of my forefathers (*amā al-dīn fa-lā raghbata lī fīhi ghayra dīn ābāʾī*). And as for marriage, even if there were some youth left in me, I still wouldn't want it (*wa-amā al-tazwīj fa-law kānat fiyya baqiyya la-mā raghibtu fīhi*), let alone now that I'm an old woman waiting for death to turn up any day.

47. This is the reading of the printed edition, but I prefer *dahyahū* ('his wits').
48. A variant of the second hemistich is given in the text: '*inna l-mulūka baṭiyyatu l-idhʿānī*'.
49. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:541–2.
50. Khālid ibn Walīd conquered the city in 633. Thomas Sizgorich has explained that the recurring trope of early Muslims exhorting their Roman and Persian opponents to convert 'is significant because it was through the use of these hermeneutic guideposts that the conquest period became comprehensible not simply as a time of military conquest, but more importantly as a period during which the changes wrought in the souls of Muḥammad's followers brought about a momentous transformation of the present world'; T. Sizgorich, '"Do Prophets Come With a Sword?": Conquest, Empire, and Historical Narrative in the Early Islamic World', *The American Historical Review* 112 (2007), 993–1015, at 1006. In the same article, Sizgorich discusses a story from ʿAdī ibn Zayd's political career (1012–4).

This reply makes no direct reference to the Muslim attempt to attain the respectability and glory of the Lakhmid kingdom by marrying Hind, but that motif is brought to the fore as their exchange progresses. After she rejects his proposal, Khālid tells her to ask him to grant her what she needs. Hind, sticking to her prideful noblesse oblige, plays the part of the good Christian. Her request is selflessly simple: 'Take care of those Christians who are under your rule (*fī dhimmatikum*)'. Khālid replies that this has already been required of them (*farḍ*) by the prophet Muḥammad.[51] That being the case, Hind says she has no need of anything else: she lives in the monastery she herself had built, tending her family's worn-out bones until she goes to join them. These bones are more than simply the bodily remains of the Lakhmid royal family buried in the monastery, they are also the ruins of the kingdom that surround it. Khālid tries to arrange for her to be given assistance, money, and clothing, but she says she does not need it. She explains that she has a sufficient, if modest, living. He then asks her to share some of her wisdom with him: 'Tell me something that has happened to you (*akhbirīnī bi-shay' adrakti*)', and her reply conjures up the lost glory of the once great kingdom:

> She replied, 'The sun had only just risen over [the palaces of] al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadīr when we were in power, but by evening, we'd become servants to others'. And then she recited a poem:
>
> *Fa-baynā nasūsu l-nāsa wa-l-amru amrunā*
> *idhā naḥnu fīhim sūqatun natanaṣṣafū.*
> *fa-tabban li-dunyā lā yadūmu na'īmuhā*
> *taqallaba tārātin bi-nā wa-taṣarrafū.*[52]
>
> We used to rule men, and power was ours,
> Now we're the subjects asking for pity.
> To hell with a world whose blessing expires,
> Undoes us at times, and does away with us.

51. Milka Levy-Rubin adduces an interesting wrinkle in the historical sectarian composition of al-Ḥīra, pointing to its status in legal debates of the post-conquest period. She notes that, in his commentary on al-Shaybānī's *Kitāb al-Siyar*, al-Sarakhsī grants—following al-Shaybānī—cities like al-Ḥīra 'where the majority of the population are *dhimmīs*' an exemption from the legal prerogatives of Muslim-majority cities. 'These latter definitions', Levy-Rubin claims, 'have nothing to do with the history of the conquest; rather, they refer to the reality of the time'. We cannot know whether the 'time' of this historical situation extends to that of al-Sarakhsī (fifth/eleventh century) or if it is limited to al-Shaybānī's lifetime (d. 187/803); M. Levy-Rubin, '*Shurūṭ 'Umar* and Its Alternatives: The Legal Debate on the Status of the *Dhimmīs*', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30 (2005), 170–206, at 179. Thanks to Fred Astren for pointing me to this reference.

52. Metre: *al-ṭawīl*.

> And then she went on to say, 'Let me tell you the greetings our kings used to use: May you be praised by a hand once wealthy, now impoverished, though you were never possessed by a hand that had attained wealth after being poor'.[53]

After the Muslim commander leaves, the Christians [of the town] come to her and ask what happened, and she answers them in verse:

> *Ṣāna lī dhimmatī wa-ʾakrama wajhī*
> *innamā yukrimu l-karīma l-karīmū*.[54]
>
> He affirmed our agreement and honoured me dear
> As an honourable person should honour a peer.

This entire episode reflects the multiple tensions surrounding the image of al-Ḥīra in later Arabo-Islamic sources, and the conflict between memory, archaeological reality, and contemporary political discourse, which each play their part in the attempt to write the city's history. Hind's monastery is a feature of the Ḥīran landscape, only a short distance from al-Kufa, a populous and politically powerful city in early Islamic Iraq. Just as this archaeological artefact has its place in the topography of the city, the memory of its inhabitants and the glory of their rulers exercises its own influence on the historical narrative. We can see that it is possible that the historical tradition of al-Ḥīra's peaceful surrender to Khālid ibn al-Walīd and the agreement he made with its inhabitants may have influenced the tenor of this story. Yet the meeting of Hind, a Lakhmid princess—who fulfils the role of al-Ḥīra's 'Last Emperor' and a Muslim commander, who symbolises the important political transformations experienced in Iraq after the Islamic conquest and the ʿAbbāsid revolution—is equally a symbol of Arabo-Islamic historical and literary culture coming to al-Ḥīra and attempting to reconstruct its lost history. This project was necessitated by al-Ḥīra's historically verifiable political importance and its unique position as the most urban Arab capital of the pre-Islamic period. The culture of this city, its residue in the heritage of pre-Islamic literary culture that was the primary focus of much of the industrious scholarly energy expended in the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods, and the presence of a large Arab Christian community in the city and its environs required an explanation and demanded to be placed within the narrative of the city as it was written for an Arabo-Islamic audience. Yāqūt mentions another Monastery of Hind in his *Muʿjam al-buldān*, distinguishing between the monastery I have been discussing—Dayr Hind al-Ṣughrā (the Monastery

53. This same sentiment is echoed in a proverb associated with al-Ḥīra and, occasionally, with Hind herself: 'May you be fed by a starving hand that once was sated, not one that is sated but once was starving'. See ʿAbd al-Ghanī, *Taʾrīkh al-Ḥīra*, 542.

54. Metre: *al-khafīf*.

of Hind the Younger)—and the Monastery of Hind the Elder.[55] The story he tells about this second monastery (Dayr Hind al-Kubrā) is yet another reflection of the character of the Ḥīran image in these later Arabo-Islamic histories. This monastery is said to have been built by Hind, the mother of ʿAmr ibn Hind, and Yāqūt includes the text of an inscription said to have been written on the monastery that includes the name of its founder, her relation to the Lakhmid lineage, her fealty to the Sasanian emperor, and a prayer to God. The story that is told about this monastery is set during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809), when the caliph heads to al-Ḥīra 'for some relaxation and to see the ruins of al-Mundhir (i.e., the Lakhmid kingdom)'. The caliph's party went into the Monastery of Hind the Younger and saw the remains of al-Nuʿmān's grave. Next they entered the Monastery of Hind the Elder, where they see an inscription on one of the walls. The caliph orders a ladder to be brought and the inscription read out. Yāqūt gives the text of the eight-line poem (in *al-sarīʿ* metre) that was supposed to have been written there. It is yet another example of the motif of the Lakhmids' lost glory that I have been tracing through its various iterations.

Inna banī l-mundhiri ʿāma–nqaḍū
bi-ḥaythu shāda l-bīʿata l-rāhibū
tanfaḥu bi-l-miski dhafārīhumū
wa-ʿanbarin yaqṭibuhu l-qāṭibū
wa-l-qazzu wa-l-kattānu ʾathwābuhum
lam yajubi l-ṣūfa lahum jāʾibū
wa-l-ʿizzu wa-l-mulku lahum rāhinun
wa-qahwatun nājūduhā sākibū
aḍḥaw wa-mā yarjūhumū ṭālibun
khayran wa-lā yarhabahum rāhibū
ka-ʾannahum kānū bi-hā luʿbatan
sāra ʾilā ayna bi-hā l-rākibū
fa-ʾaṣbaḥū fī ṭabaqāti l-tharā
Baʿda naʿīmin lahumū rātibū
sharru l-baqāyā man baqī baʿdahum
qullun wa-dhullun jadduhū khāʾibū.

The line of al-Mundhir has come to nought
Where once the monks raised churches.
Perfumed behind the ears with musk
And amber one would mix with wine,
Silk and linen were their robes;

55. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:542–543. Other accounts of this monastery are collected in ʿAbd al-Ghanī, *Taʾrīkh al-Ḥīra*, 69–70.

No one could make them wear wool.
Glory and kingship were their due,
And wine strained through cloth.
Lo, but they've faded and no one asks them
For charity anymore; the timid no longer dread.
It's as if they were only a toy—
Where has the rider taken them to?
They've become—after once being blessed—
like all other ordinary men.
The one who outlives them has it worst of all,
He's helpless and put upon; his fortune run out.

This poem resonates with the emperor-caliph, who cries so much that tears wet his beard and says, 'Yes, this is the way of the world and those who inhabit it'.

The History of an Ethos

These examples, centred as they are around Ḥīran locales, tell the story of a notable collection of memories in the Iraqi landscape, a story that reflects how later Arabo-Islamic interpreters imagined the history of that landscape and the elite who previously ruled over it. Yet in asserting that al-Ḥīra's mythical history is an Arabo-Islamic invention, conceived largely in response to architectural material in situ—the buildings on the ground, the people inhabiting the area, memories of historical figures and events—we must not deny the disconcerting possibility that the mythical history of al-Ḥīra cannot be dated. We cannot show, for good reason, that this figure was invented by Arab Muslims after the conquest of Iraq, and it is not simply a lack of historical sources that impedes this effort. Rather, al-Ḥīra as it exists in the historical record is a timeless and legendary place. Elements of its ethos seem to accord perfectly with an ʿAbbāsid projection of history, but other features, such as the character of Hind the Lakhmid princess cloistered in her monastery and defiantly confronting a victorious Muslim commander, may echo an earlier, native reaction to a dramatic political upheaval.[56] Even setting aside descriptions of the conquest, in much of the poetry said to be of pre-Islamic Ḥīran origin, we find this same

56. Much has been written about historical attitudes evinced in ʿAbbāsid poetry: see, for example, S. P. Stetkevych, 'The ʿAbbasid Poet Interprets History: Three Qaṣīdahs by Abū Tammām', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 10 (1979), 49–64; R. A. Serrano, 'Al-Buḥturī's Poetics of Persian Abodes', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28 (1997), 68–87; S. M. Ali, 'Reinterpreting al-Buḥturī's Īwān Kisrā Ode: Tears of Affection for the Cycles of History', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 37 (2006), 46–67; Julie Scott Meisami, 'Places in the Past: The Poetics/Politics of Nostalgia', *Edebiyat*, n.s., vol. 8 (1998), 63–106; Michael Zwettler, 'The Poetics of Allusion in Abu l-ʿAtāhiya's Ode in Praise of al-Hādī', *Edebiyat*, n.s., vol. 3 (1989), 1–29 and passim.

theme of fleeting glory epitomised by the later legend of al-Ḥīra. If we are unwilling to question the historical authenticity of this poetry—and that is not to say that we should be—then we must confront the fact that al-Ḥīra seems to represent itself as a kingdom built on sand. It may be the case that al-Ḥīra, in projecting this image of itself and its rulers flying too near the sun, wrote its own obituary for later sources to borrow and adapt.[57]

This essay has focused exclusively on historical accounts of the city written by later writers with their own political concerns, but it seems to me that there is much to be said of al-Ḥīra's own representation of itself as preserved in these later sources. One could easily dismiss this concern by saying that the poetry of ʿAdī ibn Zayd is inauthentic, but the fabrication of ʿAdī's poetry strikes me as more unlikely than the fact that it may simply preserve a society's identity-narrative as constructed and performed by that society's culture. Much talk of myth implies that myths can exist only as backward projections, but we must not discount the possibility that al-Ḥīra participated in the creation of a mythic tradition upon which later sources could elaborate.[58] It is obvious that later Arabo-Islamic sources built narratives around preserved Ḥīran poetry, but it is also likely that these stories began as part of al-Ḥīra's own myths about itself.

There is no suggestion that elements of al-Ḥīra's history, as we have them, were authored directly by the authors of Ḥīran culture, excepting poetry of course, but we are often too quick to think that only we could have thought up Ozymandias. Our culture delights in deconstructing myths and snickering at long-faded antiquities when they tell us to 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' This tendency is firmly rooted in a teleological, progressivist view of modern Western culture, which, as we have seen, has its parallel in pre-modern Arabo-Islamic discourse in which the ruined glories of pagan kingdoms are contrasted with the ascendancy of the empire of true believers. Yet there is neither purpose nor sense in discounting another culture's awareness of the passage of time; even those very cultures that build great monuments understand full well their mortal vulnerability. We are fooling ourselves if all we see in the dilapidated and monstrous monuments of antiquity is hubris and folly. Can we not, for example, interpret the vaulted brick design of some Ḥīran graves as a reflection of the religious architectural style prevalent in the city? And if so, can we consider this architectural

57. One should not make too much of etymological coincidence, but the most common name given to Lakhmid kings, Mundhir (the dynasty is even known collectively as al-Manādhira, pl. of Mundhir), is related to the verb *ʾandhara*, with its connotations of warning, admonition, etc.

58. Michael Cooperson's articles 'Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative', *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), 99–113, and 'Al-Maʾmūn, the Pyramids, and the Hieroglyphs' (forthcoming, in *Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies*) demonstrate the ways in which literary discourse has exercised its influence on Arabo-Islamic memory and the construction of history.

homage a self-conscious manifestation of that most common Ḥīran literary theme: material impermanence?[59] The all-powerful and merciless character of fate features prominently in the Ḥīran poetic tradition, as well as in later ʿAbbāsid interpretations of its past glory. Ḥīran culture may simply have been too keenly aware of this habit of time, the implacable enemy of permanence and luxury that featured so prominently in their literary imagination. The unmistakable emphasis on cyclical fate in later historical accounts and its prevalence as a touchstone for the *ubi sunt* motif in Ḥīran poetry may in fact have been developed as a prophylactic measure, a literary catharsis, in al-Ḥīra by Ḥīrans long before their descent from political power. Perhaps it was by conjuring a faded and ruined capital littered with once unsurpassable testaments to power and wealth and by telling tales of mendicant kings and ascetic princesses that al-Ḥīra gave vent to its anxieties. That these anxieties were also likely to have resonated with ʿAbbāsid Iraqis, who witnessed the construction and pageantry of new imperial capitals at Baghdad and Samarra, is more likely than not. Therefore, while scavenging Late Antique history for cultural continuity and finding little on the ground, we must not overlook the persistence of myths, even when those myths seem to be written from outside, looking backward in time. We are all aware that our own contemporary cultures produce somewhat banal apocalyptic myths set centuries and millennia in the future, when we are all dead and our once mighty works laid low, and everyone understands that these works allow us to explore nightmare scenarios and even—perhaps this is most obvious in the current fad for environmental apocalypses—to wish away our feared and apparently inexorable fate. Why, then, are we so comfortable dismissing the role of societies like al-Ḥīra in writing their own obituaries, in influencing the mood of later historical interpretations, which are all that survive? A comparison between the themes of Ḥīran poetry and historically and geographically matched Syriac sources may help us understand whether the poetry of someone like ʿAdī ibn Zayd reflected a Ḥīran zeitgeist rooted in what Erica Hunter has called 'the intense Christian activity in Hira during the sixth and seventh centuries AD', or whether Ḥīran fatalism is itself a later invention.[60] Moving forward, perhaps we should recognise—just as we acknowledge the primacy of ʿAbbāsid chroniclers in creating al-Ḥīra as we know it—the likelihood that our fascination with al-Ḥīra, like the earlier fascination of ʿAbbāsid historians and littérateurs, could be the result of a cultural project of manufactured image-making that began in the city where our romance is set. 'Round the decay / Of th[e] colossal wreck' that was al-Ḥīra a mythical history has grown up, but

59. For Ḥīran tombs, see 'Excavations in Iraq, 1979–80', 180; for church architecture, see Talbot Rice, 'The Oxford Excavations at Hira, 1931', 279.

60. Hunter, 'Syriac Inscriptions from al Hira'.

it would be unfair—and, ultimately, inaccurate—to stipulate that Ḥīrans could not have been the ones to set the tone.

Appendix: *Dayr Hind* from al-Shābushtī's *Book of Monasteries*

Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Maʿrūf bi-l-Shābushtī, *Kitāb al-diyārāt*, ed. Kūrkīs [Gūrgīs] ʿAwwād, 2nd ed. (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1966, repr. Damascus: Dār al-Madā, 2008), 278–80.

The Monastery of Hind bint al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir

Hind built this monastery in al-Ḥīra, joined it as a nun (*tarahhabat fīhi*), and lived in it for a very long time; then she went blind. It is one of the greatest and most populous monasteries in al-Ḥīra. It is [located] between al-Khandaq[61] and Ḥaṣrāh Bakr.[62]

When al-Ḥajjāj came to al-Kufa in the year 74 [693/4],[63] he was told that there was a monastery belonging to Hind the daughter of al-Nuʿmān between al-Ḥīra and al-Kufa and that she lived there and that she was in command of her senses. 'Look to her for she is a relic' (*fa-nẓur ilayhā fa-ʾinnahā baqiyya*). So he rode off, and the people accompanied him. When he got there, someone said to [Hind], 'The commander al-Ḥajjāj is at the door'. When she looked out from the corner of the monastery, he said to her, 'O Hind, what's the strangest thing you've ever seen?'

'Someone like me coming out to see someone like you! Don't be deceived by this world, Ḥajjāj. We were once, as al-Nābigha [al-Dhubyānī] said of us,

> I saw you were someone safe and secure in his compact
> with the people, his flock pastured freely and was safe when
> it went to water.[64]

61. *Khandaq* means 'moat', but this particular site must be the same as the site Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī calls Khandaq Sābūr, located in the desert near al-Kufa (*Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:392). In his entry on this monastery, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī locates the monastery 'at al-Ḥīra near the lands (*khiṭaṭ*) of the tribe of (Banī) ʿAbd Allah ibn Dārim in al-Kufa in [the area beyond] al-Khandaq (i.e., the moat) in a pleasant setting' (*Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:541).

62. This is the reading of ʿAwwād's edition, but I cannot identify the toponym. The 'Bakr' referred to here is, presumably, the tribal confederacy of Bakr ibn Wāʾil (W. Caskel, 'Bakr b. Wāʾil', *EI2*). Geert Jan van Gelder suggests that *ḥaṣrāh Bakr* may be a corruption of *ḥādirat Bakr* ('the settlement of Bakr').

63. al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf (d. 95/714) the famous Umayyad governor who—pace al-Shābushtī—was sent to Iraq in the year 75/694 (A. Dietrich, 'al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ b. Yūsuf b. al-Ḥakam b. ʿAḳīl al-Ṯaḳafī, Abū Muḥammad', *EI2*.

64. al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī (fl. late 6th century) was one of the most outstanding pre-Islamic poets.

And now we've become the lowest of people. Very few vessels can be filled without tipping over (*qalla inā' imtala'a illā–nkafa'*).

And so al-Ḥajjāj stormed off and sent someone to remove her from the monastery and get her to pay the tax (*kharāj*). When she and three of her family's female servants came out, one of them said:

> Women led out from Hind's monastery,
> who've submitted to baseness and rudeness.
> Tell me, is this the beginning of Resurrection Day?
> Or has time erased the pride of men?

One of the young men of al-Kufa ran to his horse, rescued them from al-Ḥajjāj's guards, and ran off. When news of this verse and what the young man had done reached al-Ḥajjāj, he said, 'If he comes to us, he'll be safe, but if we catch him, we'll kill him'. So the young man went to him and he asked him, 'What's your excuse for what you've done?' 'Pride (*al-ghayra*)', said the young man and [al-Ḥajjāj] set him free.

When Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ conquered Iraq, he went to see Hind at her monastery.[65] She went out to see him, and he paid his respects and asked if he could be of service to her. She said to him, 'I will greet you with a greeting our kings used to use: "May you be touched by a hand that has been struck by poverty after being wealthy, and not a hand that has been struck by wealth after being poor. May God never give you need of someone vile, nor ever take his blessing from a noble one without causing you to be the occasion for its restitution."' Then al-Mughīra went to see her when Muʿāwiya put him in charge of al-Kūfa.[66] He asked permission to see her, and she was told, 'The commander of the city is at the door'.

> 'Say to him', she said, 'Are you a descendant of Jabala ibn al-Ayham?'[67]
> 'No', he answered.
> 'A descendant of al-Mundhir ibn Mā' al-Samā' then?'[68]
> 'No', he answered.
> 'Well then, who are you?'
> 'Al-Mughīra ibn Shuʿba al-Thaqafī'.
> 'What do you want?'
> 'I've come to ask you to marry me'.

65. Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (d. between 50–8/670–8) was 'commander of the Arab armies during the conquest of Iraq'. (G. Hawting, 'Saʿd b. Abī Waḳḳāṣ', *EI2*). This episode is presumably set at some point during the conquest of Iraq: 14–19/635–640 (G. Hawting, 'Saʿd b. Abī Waḳḳāṣ', in *EI2*).

66. al-Mughīra ibn Shuʿba (d. 48–51/668–671) was appointed governor of al-Kufa for a second time in 41/661 by the Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiya (d. 60/680) (H. Lammens, 'al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba', *EI2*).

67. Jabala ibn al-Ayham, the last Ghassanid ruler, fought with his compatriots in Heraclius's army at the battle of Yarmūk in 536 (I. Shahîd, 'Gh̲assān', *EI2*.

68. The most famous Lakhmid king (r. c. 503–54) (A. F. L. Beeston, rev. I. Shahîd, 'al-Ḥīra', *EI2*; I. Shahîd, 'Lakhmids', *EI2*.

'If you'd come to me for [my] beauty or station, I'd have answered you. But you want to use me to show off in the caravans of the Arabs. Just so you can say "I married the daughter of Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir". Otherwise, is there anything good in the union of a one-eyed man and a blind woman?' He wrote to her (*fa-baʿatha ilayhā*), asking, 'What was your rule like?'

'I'll give you the short answer', she said. 'At one point there was no Arab on earth that didn't humble himself before us and our magnificence; nowadays there's no one we don't humble ourselves before and fear'.

'What did your father used to say about Thaqīf?' he asked.

'Two of their men asked him to settle a dispute over something or other; one of them was from [the tribe of] Iyād and the other from [the tribe of] Bakr ibn Hawāzin. He decided in favour of the Iyādī, saying,

> Thaqīf isn't part of the 'rear of Hawāzin'
> nor are they kin with ʿĀmir and Māzin.[69]

'But we're from Bakr ibn Hawāzin so you're father can say what he likes'. al-Mughīra said.

69. This verse refers to a tribal confederation known as Hawāzin, which included the tribes of Thaqīf, ʿĀmir ibn Ṣaʿṣaʿa, Māzin ibn Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Muʿāwiya ibn Bakr ibn Hawāzin, and many others. The 'rear of Hawāzin', as Montgomery Watt explains, '[comprised] Ḏjusham b. Muʿāwiya b. Bakr, Naṣr b. Muʿāwiya b. Bakr, and Saʿd b. Bakr'. The joke in the poem seems to revolve around the fact that this branch of Hawāzin, the 'rear of Hawāzin', was less prestigious than its confederates. See M. Watt, 'Hawāzin', *EI2*, C. E. Bosworth, 'Ḏjaʿda (ʿĀmir)', *EI2*, G. L. Della Vida, 'Māzin', *EI2*, and M. Lecker, 'Thaḳīf', *EI2*.

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8

'The Crinkly-Haired People of the Black Earth'

Examining Egyptian Identities in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's *Futūḥ*

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During their invasion of Egypt in 18/639, South Arabian soldiers stumbled upon the remnants of a three-millennia-old civilisation quite alien to their own. The Christian tillers of the Nile Valley must have left a deep impression—the texts that the Arab soldiers and their descendants later composed are peppered with oblique and variegated references to the Copts, the term scholars conventionally use to describe indigenous Egyptians. Though the Arabians did not produce a discrete ethnographic description of the Copts, references to them can be found in scattered and surprising places: in long, literary histories and on tiny papyrus scraps; in barely-discernable palimpsests and in winding, narrow margins; in slave contracts and in personal letters. The allusions are telling—pieced together, they allow the historian to map the changing relationship between conquerors and conquered over the course of the first three hundred years of occupation.

Sometime during this period, and certainly by the tenth century, identity in Egypt was reshaped around the distinct ethnic communities of 'Copt' and 'Arab', but this had not always been so. As recent scholarship has convincingly demonstrated, 'ethnic communities are not immutable biological or ontological essences, but the results of historical processes, or, as one might put it, historical processes in themselves'.[1] An examination of the documentary and literary sources of the first-fourth/seventh-tenth centuries suggests that neither Arab Muslim nor Egyptian Christian identity in the medieval period was as clearly defined as has been claimed.[2]

1. W. Pohl, 'Introduction', in W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities 300–800* (Leiden, 1998), 1–16, at 8.

2. E. Wipszycka. *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive* (Rome, 1996); E. Wipszycka. 'La christianisation de l'Égypte aux IVe-Vie siècles: Aspects sociaux et ethniques', *Aegyptus* 68 (1988), 117–65.

The word 'Copt' (*qbṭ*) itself was a neologism. It was the Arabicisation of the Greek word Αἰγύπτιος and was never used by the Egyptian Christians to describe themselves. In the Coptic language, their community was usually described as *rem en kēme* (the people of Egypt).[3] Indeed, until the Arab conquests, the term 'Copt' had been used solely to describe the spoken language of the Egyptians. It was only in the years after the conquest that it began to refer to the Egyptians as a people, first in Arabic and subsequently in the various Coptic dialects.[4]

While the first literary Arabic histories of Egypt, composed in the late third/ninth century, refer to Egyptian Christians and even use the word *qbṭ* to describe them, one finds few mentions of that term in the documentary texts of the previous century and a half—in fact, it is absent from all datable writings of that period. This may, at first, seem surprising, contradicting, as it does, the claims made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by scholars, Egyptian nationalists, and British orientalists alike, that the Copts had been a fixed, firm, and well-defined ethnic community. Those 'sons of the Pharaohs', they believed, were the carriers of a mystical and essential 'Egyptianness' from the time of the Ptolemies.[5] This constructed vision of the past—which owed as much to European racial theorists as to Egyptian elites dreaming up a new nation—had little to do with the early Islamic Egypt it purportedly described.[6] For the first two centuries of Islamic rule in Egypt, ethnic identity was much less stable and concrete than these scholars had hoped. It was only in the years to come, during the fourth/tenth century, that 'Copt' and 'Arab' would emerge as distinct ethnic identities in Egypt. This chapter will lay out how and why these social categories became such powerful organising concepts.

I will highlight three main developments: first, that the terms used by the Arabs to describe their indigenous Egyptian subjects changed significantly over the first three hundred years of their rule; second, that this change was both contingent on, and resultant from, the changing ideas that Christians held about themselves and their community; and third, that the main source hitherto used by scholars to examine Arab and Christian identity in early Islamic Egypt—a conquest history (*Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbāruhā*) written by Egypt's first Arab historian, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam—reveals more about the third/

3. *The Coptic Encyclopedia,* ed. Aziz Suryal Atiya (New York, 1991), s.v. Copt. This seems outdated, there being no known instance of the word 'Copt' in Greek or Coptic papyri.

4. It is difficult to ascertain when a fully developed 'Coptic' identity—one that associated the language with ethnicity as well as religion—emerged. Roman persecution, Persian subjugation, and the contested appointment of a Chalcedonian patriarch may all have contributed to a sense of community amongst Egyptian Christians.

5. C. Bayly, 'Representing Copts and Muhammadans: Empire, Nation, and Community in Egypt and India, 1880–1', in C. Bayly, L. Fawaz, and R. Ilbert (eds.), *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York, 2001), 158–203.

6. D. Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?: Archaeology, Museums and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War 1* (Berkeley/ Los Angeles, 2003), 258–86.

ninth-century world in which it was composed than it does about the first/seventh century it purportedly describes. This is particularly important because it was in the third/ninth century that an independent, local Egyptian Arab identity was developing, altogether distinct from a general Arab-Muslim identity. It was at once tied to the changing status of Christians in Egypt, as well as to older, pre-conquest ideas about this rich province and its inhabitants.

The years immediately preceding the composition of the *Futūḥ* were particularly important—for the first time since the conquest, the dominance of the Arab military and administrative elites (the socio-cultural group to which Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam himself belonged) was threatened. The invasion of Egypt by Turkic slave-soldiers, and the subsequent bid for autonomy under their leader, Ibn Ṭūlūn, would deal a serious blow to the status of the Arab ruling groups.

The *Futūḥ* was, in part, the attempt by a member of an imperiled and desperate elite to vie for legitimacy and status within the empire, against the claims of parvenu Turkic soldiers. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam would make this attempt by writing a history of Egypt in which a familial and spiritual bond between his own class and the Christians over whom they ruled would be inscribed. This special relationship left no place for the Turkic soldiers, whose absence from the text is striking. As such, it is a fascinating testament to the emergence of a distinct Arabo-Egyptian identity, but it is a much thinner record of the first/seventh-century conquests it allegedly describes. There are remnants of a conquest-era tradition, but it is impossible to evaluate them on the basis of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's text alone. It is for this reason that we turn to the documentary texts (the papyri) in the last section of this chapter. From these fragments, I will lay out a complementary story—of how increasing numbers of converts to Islam would blur the hitherto distinct categories of Muslim Arab soldier and Christian Egyptian peasant. Identities that had gone unquestioned were complicated, contested, and redefined.[7]

The Historical Background: Egypt from the Conquest to the Third/Ninth Century[8]

In its first century, the Arab occupation had little effect on the majority of the population of Egypt. The first wave of Arab conquerors, no more than four thousand men, did not settle in the countryside immediately after the conquest. Instead, they chose to build and inhabit small garrison towns (*amṣār*), which isolated them from their subjects.

7. D. Nirenberg, 'Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain, *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 1065–93; D. Nirenberg, 'Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-century Spain', *Past and Present* 174 (2002), 3–41.

8. H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates,* 2nd ed. (Harlow, 2004), 307–9.

By about 90/710, however, a succession of peasant uprisings prompted a few soldiers to migrate into the countryside.[9] Hitherto, the Arabs had had little impact on the day-to-day lives of the indigenous communities they governed: the Christian subjects maintained their allegiance to the church as they had done under previous periods of imperial rule, and they retained a vast degree of administrative independence. So minor was the impact of the occupation in those first years that, except for a few instances connected with administration and taxation, there is hardly a reference to the Arabs in the Greek and Coptic papyri of the period.

Where interactions between conquerors and conquered did occur, they were limited to the collection of taxes and the requisitioning of goods, mainly to fund the military campaigns in Nafr in the West. This socio-cultural distinction—and distance—between Arab soldier and Egyptian peasant remained important until the abolition of the *diwān*, the list of Arab Muslim fighters who received stipends, under ʿUmar II (c.682–720).[10]

Moreover, religious conversion remained extremely limited. Those who did convert to Islam were usually high-ranking officials who had migrated into the urban centres.[11] Although we have no way of estimating the scale or rates of conversion, there seems to have been an acceleration in the process by the mid-second/eighth century, when Muslims began to figure significantly in the documentary sources. It was also during those years, according to the historian al-Maqrīzī, that Muslim soldiers began to intermarry with Christian peasants, their increased interaction presumably leading to further conversion.

It was not long before Arab soldiers no longer constituted the majority of the Muslim population in Egypt.[12] Waves of religious conversion and exogamy blurred the neat boundaries between the Arab colonists and their Egyptian subjects. Questions over the status of the non-Arab converts, both fiscal and spiritual, became central. On what basis could their position of socio-economic subordination be justified? Were not all Muslims equal in the eyes of God? How could it be that *mawālī* (converts) continued to pay the poll tax in many regions of the empire, whilst those descended from Arab conquering families did not?[13] Throughout the empire, non-Arabs struggled to define their place in the emergent ʿAbbāsid polity. The rebuttals they put forward against Arab claims of spiritual superiority ultimately drew on their pre-Islamic pasts and

9. P. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: Papyri Related to an Eighth Century Egyptian Official* (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2004), chap. 2.

10. Ibid. Al-Kindī dates this to ʿUmar II's reign.

11. P. Crone, 'Mawlā', *EI2*.

12. It was only in the late eighth/fourteenth century, however, that Egypt would become fully Islamicised. See T. El-Leithy, *Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo 1293–1524 A.D.* (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2004).

13. Crone, 'Mawlā'.

histories. In this way, the historians, poets, and orators of the newly Arabised provinces vied for a prominent place on the politico-spiritual map of Islam. It is precisely in the context of these debates that Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's text was composed and must therefore be read.

Concurrently, the ʿAbbāsid Empire was quickly fracturing—the conquest of Egypt by a Turkish military faction, the Ṭūlūnids, was to play a significant role in shaping the self-image of, and relations between, Muslims of Arab and non-Arab descent.

After the death of the caliph Mutawwakil in 247/861, the Muslim world was thrown into anarchy. Byzantium was undergoing a military revival; Petronas' victory in the 250s/860s was the first of a century-long series of triumphs against the ʿAbbāsid empire.[14] The caliphs' inability to defend Egypt against Byzantine attacks, such as the raid on Damietta of 238/853, diminished their legitimacy.[15]

Concurrently, provincial governors across the empire were increasingly forced to rely on local elites who resented the fealty they paid to the weak centre, Samarra. With no revenue coming in from the provinces, the caliphs remunerated their Turkic generals, the pillars of their army, with the governorships of certain provinces—Bāyakbāk (d. 256/870), for example, was granted the governorship of Egypt by the caliph Muʿtazz (r. 252–5/866–9) in 868. Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn (b. 220/835), Bāyakbāk's stepson, would become the effective ruler of the province, after crushing rebellions in Syria and Palestine on behalf of the caliph. Though he spoke good Arabic, he lacked the social prestige of the Egyptian Arab elites he governed, who resisted their subordination to the Turkic parvenu. After a four-year struggle with Egypt's Arab fiscal governor, Ibn Ṭūlūn established his uncontested grip on the province by diverting the revenues from Samarra to Fustat. By building an independent army (of Nubians and Greeks), Ibn Ṭūlūn confirmed the region's autonomy from the capital for the first time in Egypt's Islamic history.

It was in this climate of political turbulence—Byzantine victories, and regional independence, both political and cultural—that Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam composed the chief surviving narrative of the Egyptian conquest, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa, and Spain* (*Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbāruhā*) in about 260/870. It is this text that provides the fullest description of the Christian Egyptians in the late third/ninth century.[16] However, given the

14. M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium* (London, 1996), 311.

15. G. Levi Della Vida, 'A Papyrus Reference to the Damietta Raid of 853', *Byzantion* 17 (1944), 212–22. This is notable because of the way in which Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam seems constantly to be juxtaposing the Rūmīs (Byzantines) and the Qbṭ. The conquest-narrative section of his text is filled with such contrasts. For example, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain,* ed. C. Torrey (New Haven, 1922), 83.

16. All translations from this text are my own.

well-known problems posed by early Islamic literary texts, one must evaluate 'The History' in the light of the many documentary texts that survive. It is only by comparing the literary source with its documentary correlates that one can gain an accurate picture of the changing relationship between the conquering Arabs and their subjects.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam and the Writing of *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbāruhā*

Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was born in 182/799 to a renowned scholarly family which was descended from the Prophet's tribe and several of the earliest conquerors of Egypt. His father, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, was a leading authority in *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* and was responsible for the introduction of the Mālikī school of law into Egypt. He was also closely associated with Imām al-Shāfiʿī, who would be buried in the family mausoleum of the Banū ʿAbd al-Ḥakam and whose visit to Egypt ʿAbd Allāh had initially funded.[17] All four of ʿAbd Allāh's sons, including the celebrated jurist Muḥammad, were to become prominent in their own right.[18] The eminence of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's family, and its decline during his lifetime, would profoundly shape his world view and the writing of his 'History'.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's 'History' is divided into seven seemingly disconnected sections and is a patchwork of several classical genres. His opening and closing chapters are compilations of Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*s), the science in which he was most accomplished, while the second section is a *faḍāʾil* text that exalts Egypt and its people.[19] The four middle sections are a narrative of the conquest of Egypt, North Africa, and al-Andalus. These sections paint a consistent picture of co-operation between the invaders and the invaded, positing a special spiritual relationship based on ancient ties of kinship. This is illustrated by scores of *ḥadīth*s prescribing the good treatment of the Copts.

Writing the 'Egyptian Arabs'

The penultimate section of the text, devoted entirely to the judges of Egypt, provides an especially important insight into the author's world view and his intentions in composing the 'History'. It seeks to proclaim Egypt's sacred status in the empire and to celebrate the special status of Arab elites in Egypt. Written

17. Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dībāj al-mudhahhab fī maʿrifat aʿyān ʿulamāʾ al-madhhab* (Cairo: ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Shaqrūn, 1351/1932), 134, 166, 231; F. Rosenthal, 'Ibn Abd al-Hakam', *EI2*.

18. Al-Kindī, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt of al-Kindī*, ed. R Guest (Leiden, 1912).

19. Ibn al-Kindī, *Faḍāʾil Misr al-maḥrūssa li-Ibn al-Kindī*, ed. A. M. ʿUmar and I. A. ʿAdawī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1997).

against the background of the displacement of the Arab-Egyptian elite by Turkic military commanders, it asserts the eminence of Egypt and its Arabs.

'The Judges of Egypt', which appears as an appendix to the main text, deals with a subject of special interest to the author because of his family's involvement in the profession. It is similar in style to the biographical-dictionary genre of the later classical period, listing chronologically the names of, and anecdotes pertaining to, Egypt's most important Arab judges, from the start of conquest until 896. Given that Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam died in 871, it is possible that this section may have been appended, in part, after the author's death by one of his keen pupils.[20]

The names of the judges in this section recall pointedly the great conquering families of Egypt; ʿĀbis ibn Saʾīd al-Muradī 'of the al-ʿAbbāsī *kum* [family or tribe] of Fustat Misr'; ʿUthman ibn Qays ibn Abī al-ʿĀs; ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Hujayr al-Khawlānī ('son of Ibn Ḥujayra'), whose younger brother also became a *qādī* in 711/2; and ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Muʿāwiya ibn Ḥudayj al-Kindī. The list of judges' names echoes an earlier section of the 'History' in which Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam lists the most illustrious conquerors of Egypt. It reads like a who's who of early Islamo-Arab elites: companions of the Prophet; *anṣār* of Medina, revered heroes of legendary battles such as Badr; and esteemed *ḥadīth* transmitters.[21] It includes famous individuals such as ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, son of the second caliph, and Abū Rāfiʿ, a *mawlā* (client) of the Prophet. More importantly, it lists the ancestors and relations of almost all the *qāḍī*s mentioned in the later section. Where the *qāḍī*'s illustrious pedigree is implicit in his name, his genealogy is not cited. For example, we encounter the son of a caliph, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, as well as a founding member of the ʿAbbāsī family, Qays ibn Abī al-ʿAs (father of ʿUthmān). In pointing to the kinship ties between local elites and their imperial counterparts, the author was staking a claim to the spiritual superiority of Egyptian Arab families—of which his was one—in the empire at large.

Moreover, the author is careful to distinguish between those who came to Egypt at the time of the conquest and those who joined them later. For example, he insists that "Amār ibn Yāssir only entered Egypt in the time of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān'.[22] Similarly, he reports that 'it was disputed that Saʿd ibn Abī Waqād came at the time of the conquest; it was said that he came after'.[23] For Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, historical milestones such as the conquest become great distinguishing marks, emphasising the social and spiritual superiority of his peers to the parvenus who were beginning to displace them.

20. As far as I am aware, this has been previously unnoted, and there is no discussion of this problem in the secondary literature.

21. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest,* 91–8.

22. Ibid., 96.

23. Ibid., 95.

But Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was not simply celebrating 'Arabness'. His 'History' sought to create an identity that was at once Arab, defined by blood, and Egyptian, defined by place. The epithets he uses are particularly revealing. For example, he refers to the conquering hero, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, as *amīr al-qawm*. In this context, *qawm* refers to a people or a tribe. Those he is referring to here must be the Egyptian Arabs, whom he believed to be a distinct 'people' within the empire, with a distinct cultural identity that overrode their pre-conquest tribal denominations. This is particularly clear in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's description of himself.[24] He gives himself two *laqab*s or titles—one tribal, 'al-Qurashī' (of the Prophet's tribe), and the other provincial, 'al-Miṣrī' (the Egyptian). This dual, almost paradoxical, titulature reveals a uniquely Arab-Egyptian identity that would become increasingly important in the third/ninth century.

This dual identity, at once Egyptian and Arab, is also evident in snippets of poetry quoted by the author. In a verse cited to celebrate the family of the judge ʿAbbās ibn Saʾīd al-Muradī, ʿAbd al-Ḥakam exalts the newly Arabised Alexandria:

> I yearn for Alexandria, I have in it brothers in faith and fellows in the struggle.
>
> Abū al-Ḥarith al-Mādī and Ashhab are among them, and they are exemplars of faith. In Alexandria . . . Rome had established a church to oppress the people.[25]

This cryptic poem can be dated to the mid-second/eighth century, as it refers to Abū al-Ḥarith al-Mādī and Ashhab, companions of Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/796), founder of the Mālikī school. It identifies Alexandria, which had been, until the Arab conquest, the quintessential Byzantine city, by its lofty Arab(-Egyptian) citizens.

The poem suggests that, in describing an Egyptian-Arabness, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was drawing on traditions and historical memories that predated the third/ninth century but that would become increasingly important throughout it. Patchy and anecdotal evidence suggests that, as early as the mid-first/seventh century, Arabs in Egypt were beginning to assert a certain degree of political, if not cultural, independence. This political independence may have predated a cultural one. Its earliest manifestation is the attempted assassination of the caliph ʿUthmān in 35/656 by a group of Egyptian Arabs, less than two decades after the completion of the conquest.[26]

24. Ibid., 1.
25. Ibid., 233.
26. M. Hinds, 'The Murder of the Caliph ʿUthman', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3/44 (1972), 450–69.

Similarly, Egyptian Arabs asserted their political autonomy several decades later by inciting a rebellion against the imperial centre, in which a Muslim army apostatised to Christianity. The entire province of Egypt had to be effectively re-conquered by Marwān after the second *fitna* (63–5/683–5).[27] The political independence displayed by Arabs in Egypt in the late first/seventh century would be reformulated by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam as a cultural independence. As the Arab elites of Egypt were being supplanted by Turkic Ṭūlūnid soldiers in the third/ninth century, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam sought to emphasise the historical and spiritual links between his own social group and the land and native people of Egypt. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam opens his text by exalting the native Egyptian population and emphasising their special spiritual status in Islam. Here, the author unites the genealogies of old Arab elite and Egyptian native subject, celebrating a new kind of regional cultural independence that would become increasingly important in the third/ninth century.

Māriyya and Hājar: The Abrahamic Link

In the chapter entitled 'The Prophet's Entrusting of the Copts', Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam cites ten variations of a ubiquitous *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet prescribes protection and good treatment of the Copts. A tradition that probably originated in the Prophet's own lifetime was therefore infused with renewed significance by the Arab elites of Egypt in the late third/ninth century:

> The Prophet entrusted his companions with the crinkly-haired humans [*ādam juʿd*]. When asked as to whom this nation [*qawm*] was, the Prophet explained that these were the Copts of Egypt, for they will assist you against your enemies and in your faith.[28]
>
> The Prophet said you that will become soldiers [*ajnād*] and the best soldiers of you are the people of the West. So be God-fearing towards the Copts. Do not accord them the destruction of a settled region and peoples [*ḥaḍar*].[29]
>
> The Copts are important to three prophets; Abraham [Ibrāhīm] . . . married Hājar [Hagar], Yūsuf married the daughter of the governor of ʿAyn Shams, and the Prophet married Maryam.[30]

27. *The Anonymous Chronicle of 1234*, in A. Palmer (trans.), *The Seventh Century in the West Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993), 114; *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos,* trans. R. W. Thompson (Liverpool, 1999), 176; P. Sijpesteijn, 'New Rule over Old Structures: Egypt after the Muslim Conquest', in H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt* (Oxford, 2007), 183–200.

28. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest,* 3.

29. Ibid., 3.

30. Ibid., 4.

Two similar *ḥadīths* appear in an ostensibly earlier text, the Prophet's *Sīra*:[31]

> 'When you conquer Egypt, treat its people well, for they claim our protection and kinship'. When I asked . . . what the apostle meant by making their kin and he replied that Hājar, the mother of Ismāʾīl, was of their stock.[32]
>
> Show piety in dealing with the protected peoples, those of the settled lands, the black, the crinkly-haired, for they have a noble ancestor and marriage ties with us. ʿUmar, the *mawlā* of Ghuffra . . . explained that the noble ancestor had been Hājar, the wife of Abraham, and that the marriage tie referred to Māriyya, the prophet's concubine, 'whom the Muqawqīs gave him'.[33]

Are these *ḥadīth* the product of the third/ninth century or of an earlier period? In other words, how useful are they in explaining Arab-Coptic relations and Arab attitudes towards their indigenous subjects in the first two centuries of Islamic rule?[34]

Although the Prophet's imperative—that the Copts be well-treated by the invading Arab armies—is the same in all of the *ḥadīth,* he cites three distinct reasons for doing so: the tie of kinship between the Arabs and the Egyptians; the crucial role that the Copts were predicted to play in assisting the Arabs militarily; and the role that they were predicted to play in the administration of Egypt, leaving the Muslims free to attend to their spiritual duties.

There is also much variation in the way in which the Copts are described in these *ḥadīth*. Several of them define the Copts occupationally, by their attachment to the land: '*ḥaḍar,* a land in which they measure with the *qirāṭ*', or as the 'people of the black earth'. In these texts, they are opposed to the Arab *ajnād* (soldiers). Others define them ethnically/racially by their black and crinkly hair (*ādam juʿd*). By reading the *ḥadīths* carefully for their variation in content, and by comparing them to the more easily datable documentary papyri, a trajectory of changing Arab-Coptic relations emerges clearly.

Although the earliest version of the *ḥadīth* can be found in the *Sīra,* it is difficult to date anything quoted in that work with certainty.[35] Some version

31. Ibn Isḥāq, *The Life of Muhammad,* trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford, 1980).
32. Ibid., 3.
33. Ibid., 691.
34. Using the common-link theory to determine a date at which these *ḥadīth* came into circulation is fruitless. Although the *ḥadīth* is cited in more than ten variations, only four of them join at the common link of Kaʿb ibn ʿAbd al-Mālik, a renowned companion of the Prophet. It is thus difficult to date the *ḥadīth* to earlier than the second/eighth century. Because it is impossible to date these *ḥadīth*s on the basis of *isnad* (chain of transmitters), we must turn to the *matn* (the content itself) to attempt to establish a chronology.
35. As both authors had strong links to Egypt, it is more difficult to say with certainty whether these particular traditions originated with Ibn Hishām or with his predecessor. Ibn Isḥāq had been a student in Alexandria under Yazīd ibn Abī Habīb in 119/737, and it may have been through him that the tradition regarding Egypt was derived.

of the two *ḥadīth*s quoted in it probably originated with the Prophet himself—to prove his 'Pure Descent from Adam and Abraham', as the title of the section in which they appear suggests.[36] Muḥammad's imperatives, exalting Egypt and the Egyptians and recommending their protection, were a crucial part of his attempt to claim descent from Abraham.[37] By emphasising the blood relationship between the Arabs and the Egyptians, Muḥammad was attempting to fashion himself in the image of his purported ancestor. He prescribes the good treatment of the Copts (*aqbāṭ)* for reasons of kinship: Hājar—Abraham's concubine, the mother of Ismāʾīl, and thus the ancestor of all Arabs—was Egyptian. Māriyya al-Qibṭiyya, the Prophet's concubine, held the unique position of having borne Ibrāhīm, his first-born son, whose untimely death was the subject of the Prophet's greatest sorrow, according to several traditions.[38]

The Egyptian-wife *topos* was a common one in early Islamic tradition. In addition to Abraham, both Yūsuf and Ismāʾīl had Egyptian wives ascribed to them in several literary texts, including the *Futūḥ*.[39] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam explains that Yūsuf married the daughter of the governor of ʿAyn Shams; one of the versions of the *ḥadīth* he cites suggests this as the reason that the Copts had received special status.[40] This idea can be traced back to an earlier period, as it also appears in the *Futūḥ al-Bahnasiyya*, the sources of which seem to have been earlier than those used for *Futūḥ Miṣr*.[41]

36. Ibn Isḥāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 2. This is a chapter heading.

37. M. Cook and P. Crone, *Hagarism* (Cambridge, 1977), 3–17; F. Millar, 'Hagar, Ishmael, Josephus and the Origins of Islam', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44 (1993), 23–45. Millar has shown that the idea that Arabs were descended from Abraham pre-dated Islam. Therefore, Muḥammad cannot have been said to have invented his Abrahamic lineage from scratch. Rather, he was building on something that was already widely believed. and engaged in an Abrahamic self-fashioning during his own lifetime.

38. According to the Arabic literary sources, the Prophet sent ambassadors to several surrounding countries in the year 7/628, including one to al-Muqawqīs of Egypt. Besides an answer to his letter, the Prophet was sent two Egyptian slaves, named Māriyya and Shīrīn. The Prophet chose Māriyya to be his wife and named the son that she bore him after his forefather, Abraham. Many elements of the Abrahamic narrative are reworked in the *Life of Muhammad*.

39. R. Dagorn, *La Geste d'Ismaël d'après l'onomastique et la tradition arabe* (Paris 1981), 335. According to Genesis 21, 'se contente simplement de signaler . . . que sa mère lui choisit une femme du pays d'Égypte', but al-Ṭabarī quotes Ibn Isḥāq to the effect that he married Sayyida bint Mudād ibn ʿAmr, a Jurhumī. Similarly, Ibn Saʿd attributes to him a Jurhumī wife but gives a different name.

40. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest*, 5.

41. J. Jary, 'La conquête du Fayoum par les Musulmans d'après le *Futūḥ al-Bahnasā*', *Annales Islamogiques* 9 (1970), 9–20. He argues that there are many Greco-Coptic terms and names that are used with no understanding of their true meaning and must therefore betray the attempts of a later Arab mind to make sense of early sources that he does not understand. The account of the conquest given here varies slightly from that in the *Futūḥ Miṣr,* in that, like the generally reliable John of Nikiu, it places a heavy focus on the region of Fayyūm, which Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam does not. The latter's battle scenes and main episodes all centre on Fustat and Alexandria and may betray a later Arabising and centralising bias.

Sceptics have argued that the character of Māriyya al-Qibṭiyya was posthumously written into the *Sīra* by the newly converted, who sought to embellish the Prophet's unpretentious existence by drawing from both the Abrahamic model and the biographies of the great emperors. Hailing from Persia and Byzantium, these *mawālī* were well acquainted with tropes of imperial grandeur and attempted to weave these into a new narrative that would place Muḥammad on an equal footing with such illustrious rulers as the Byzantine emperor Maurice (582–602) and the Persian king Khusraw II (590–628).[42]

While the introduction of the Egyptian-wife figure may have been part of an attempt to fashion the Prophet posthumously into a religious and political figure of international bearing, it seems more plausible that it was part of the Prophet's own politically motivated efforts, made during his lifetime, to emphasise his Abrahamic legacy. For instance, by advocating pilgrimage to the Kaʿba, a site that he was to transform into Islam's main religious shrine, he was literally following in the footsteps of his forefathers, Abraham and Adam. Just as he celebrated Abraham's sacrifice in the pilgrimage rituals, the Prophet may well have decided to take an Egyptian slave girl as his wife, as his forefather was said to have done. And the Prophet could have paid no greater homage to his supposed ancestor than to name his first-born son after him.

While the original function of the *ḥadīth* may have been to relate Muḥammad to Abraham, the later variants cited by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam reveal an Egyptianising bias. These variants include details that would have been impossible to foresee during Muḥammad's lifetime, before the conquests actually took place. The ideas initially inherited from Muḥammad were re-moulded in the third/ninth century to fit the new realities described. For example, the *ḥadīth* that predicts the role that the Copts were to play in carrying out earthly duties, thus leaving the Muslims the time to attend to their spiritual duties, can be traced firmly to before the end of the first/beginning of the eighth century. The Copts had a near monopoly over important administrative functions after the Arab conquest, but, by the late first/early eighth century, they had lost that privilege. At the level of the five *duces* (independent governors), who continued to exist until about 85/705, Muslims were appointed immediately after the conquest, but at the lower level of the pagarchy—i.e., the level of the Fayyūm, Akhmīm, Bahnasā, and the Ihnās provinces, etc.), Muslims did not begin to replace Christians until about 80/700. This *ḥadīth* seems to refer to the earlier period when Muslims had little to do with the day-to-day administration of the country. Arabs had eased into provincial administrative roles, and administration was no longer limited to the Copts. This *ḥadīth* would therefore have been no longer applicable after about 90/710, and probably dated to an earlier period.

42. K. Öhrnberg, 'Māriya al-Qibtiyya Unveiled', *Studia Orientalia* 55/14 (1984), 297–303.

Similarly, the distinction between people of the land and the soldiery is one that appears in the documentary evidence at the end of the first/beginning of the eighth century and could have only been made by someone who knew the arrangement in place after the conquests. The juxtaposition of the Arabs, secluded in their garrison cities, and the Christian peasant subjects was an important feature of first/seventh-century and late first/early eighth-century life, as outlined above. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was a jurist and, by default, a *ḥadīth* scholar. By formulating the tradition as a prophecy to be fulfilled, he sought to give it authenticity and significance.

What was Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam attempting to do by selecting these *ḥadīths* in the opening passages of his conquest narrative? What function did they play in the third/ninth-century context in which Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was writing? In the third/ninth century, Egypt had effectively broken away from the central government of the ʿAbbāsid Empire. Concurrently, in their newfound (and lucrative) homeland, the Arab conquerors were moving out of their garrison towns in great numbers and settling the countryside. Even more important, however, was the recent appropriation of the Egyptian coffers by a new Turkic elite, the Ṭūlūnids (254/868). Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's text responded to the Arab elites' loss of some of their power under the new rulers of Egypt. Through his selection of the aforementioned *ḥadīth*s, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was highlighting the unique relationship—one that the Ṭūlūnids could not enjoy—between the Arab settlers in Egypt and their indigenous subjects. He was also promoting the Egyptian Arabs' superiority over their counterparts elsewhere in the Islamic world, by celebrating the land of Egypt and its people and especially by exalting the bonds of spirituality and kinship between conquerors and conquered. It is necessary to compare Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's construction of the past to the documentary evidence for the first/seventh to third/ninth centuries, and it is to this rich corpus of papyri that we now turn.

Documentary Evidence: The Papyri

There are four ways in which the native Egyptians are described in the papyrological texts: as 'people of the earth' (*ahl al-arḍ*), as the 'people of the covenant' (*ahl al-dhimma*), as Copts (*qibṭ*), and as foreigners (*ʿajam*). The use of the word 'Copt' is as rare in these sources as it is in the literary evidence; it first appears in the third/ninth century. The designations 'people of the earth' and 'people of the covenant' date from the first two centuries of Islam, whereas the term 'foreigner' does not appear until the fourth/tenth century. Out of this, a neat chronological pattern emerges, which will enlighten our understanding of the 'History' and other literary texts of the third/ninth century.

The earliest Arabic papyri that refer to the native Egyptians date from the late first/early eighth century and describe them as peasants. Papyrus

APEL III 148, dating from 708–10, describes the Egyptians as the people of the land (*ahl al-arḍ*).[43] This term is also used in P. Heid III 1, dating from 710, in which the 'people of the land' are contrasted with the soldiers (*jund*).[44] APEL III 154, also dated to 710, describes the subjects as *nabaṭī* (peasant).[45] The association between the native Egyptians and the land that they farmed is also prominent in the *Futūḥ*. The Copts are described in the *Futūḥ Miṣr* as the 'people of the black soil' and 'of a land where they use the term *qirāṭ*'.[46] The same *ḥadīth* collection describes the Arabs, by contrast, as *jund* (soldiers). The Copts described themselves as 'the people of Egypt', the word for which in Coptic, Kēme, was derived from a Pharaonic word meaning 'black soil'.

There seems to be a change in the term used to describe the Egyptians by the end of the second/eighth century; a papyrus dated to about 789 is 'addressed to all those in the *kūra* [Arabic regional division derived from the *curiae* of the Byzantine administration] of Ahnās, the Muslims and the people under custody (*ahl al-dhimma*)'.[47] The term *ahl al-dhimma* is used in almost exactly the same way in a papyrus (AP 2704) dated only a year later.[48] There are several *ḥadīth*s cited by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam that use the word *dhimma* to describe the protection that the Muslims should accord to the Copts. Whilst it is significant that the same word is used in both the documentary and literary sources, it is difficult to determine which term comes first. Is the term *dhimma* borrowed from the sayings of the Prophet to describe the people of Egypt, or does Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam appropriate a legal term of the third/ninth century and impose it on a purported saying of the Prophet?

The first use of the term 'Copt' in documentary writing is surprisingly late, in an undated and peculiar letter on papyrus, in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, addressed to a certain Ridda bint ʿAlī.[49] It is a complaint about Ridda's attempts to prevent a tax collector from collecting the *kharāj* (land tax) which he had been assigned, saying that she had 'unleashed the Copts on him' (*wa-walaytī al-aqbāt ʿalayhi*). It does not open with a *basmalla,* and it ends with the formula *ḥafiẓaka Allāh wa-abqāka*. On these grounds, it can be dated to c. 800 at the earliest. The same volume holds an equally cryptic papyrus, dated to 936, that contains substantial lacunae. The context in which *qbṭ* is used is unclear, although it may be a reference to 'the properties of the Copts' or to the

43. A. Grohmann, *From the World of Arabic Papyri* (Cairo, 1952), 126.
44. Ibid., 124.
45. Ibid., 129.
46. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest*, 5–6.
47. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, 132–3.
48. W. Diem, 'Einige Frühe Amtliche Urkunden Aus Der Sammlung Papyrus Erzherzog Rainier', *Le Muséon* 97 (1984), 109–58, at 136–7.
49. *Catalogue of Arabic Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth (Manchester, 1933), 2:9.

'months of the Copts'.[50] There is another reference in P. Caire BE inv. Tahih 1900, which is a letter relating to the manumission of a slave. This is the only case known to me in which a Copt refers to the Coptic language. The papyrus, dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century, describes the slave as being called 'Safra in Arabic, and her name in Coptic [*bi-al-qibtiyya*] is Dagasha'. The appearance of the word 'Copt' in the documentary evidence is almost contemporary with its appearance in the *Futūḥ*.

The fourth and final category used to describe Copts, *ʿajam* (foreign), is limited to several legal texts dating to the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, most of which are from the Fayyūm region. There is only one instance in which a person is described as *ʿajamiyya,* and this occurs in a slave manumission document. Whilst this is from a period that lies beyond the scope of this chapter, it suffices to say that, contrary to expectations, there are no records describing the Copts as foreign earlier than three hundred years after the conquest.[51]

The earliest descriptions of the indigenous population of Egypt in the papyrological documentary evidence therefore make no reference to the religious inclinations of the people they describe. There are no references at all to the language that they spoke, nor to their ethnicity. The chief distinguishing feature between the conquerors and the conquered is that of occupation: the Copts were seen primarily as peasants, whereas the Arabs were described only as soldiers. This is to be expected, because, until the late first/early eighth century, it was assumed that none of the conquerors was occupied in agriculture. A heading to one of the chapters of the *Futūḥ* is entitled 'the ban on Arabs owning land', and the papyrological evidence seems to support this, because it is assumed in the papyri that all who are considered *ahl al-dhimma* are of the tax-paying conquered people.[52]

The first century after the conquest thus yields a simple dichotomy: all those who tilled the land were Christian and non-Arab (and non-Arabic speaking), whereas the Muslims were exclusively Arab and military.

What determines the shift to a new vocabulary by the end of that first century? The previously unused term *ahl al-dhimma* appears at the time when the conquering Muslims, who were previously engaged exclusively in military duties, had begun to settle in the countryside. Al-Maqrīzī dates this to after the first Coptic rebellion, which al-Kindī places in the late first/early eighth

50. Ibid., 9:3.

51. For the use of the term *ʿajam* with reference to the language of the Copts, see N. Abbott, 'The Monasteries of the Fayyum', *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 53 (1936), 13–33; G. Frantz-Murphy, 'Papyrus Agricultural Contracts in the Oriental Institute Museum from Third/Ninth Century Egypt', in R. Curiel and R. Gyselen (eds.), *Itinéraires d'Orient. Hommages à Claude Cahen. Textes réunies* (Bures-sur-Yvette, 1994), 119–31.

52. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest,* 162.

century.[53] Moreover, in examining the Greek and Coptic papyrological evidence, one finds no reference to Arabs or Muslims in the countryside before the early second/mid-eighth century. The change in the term for the indigenous Egyptians parallels one that occurs in the types of taxation. Hitherto, there had been a single type of land tax, known as *jizya*, but, by the end of the first/beginning of the eighth century, the papyrological evidence shows a shift in terms, and two new categories of tax appear, *kharāj* and *sadaqa*.[54] The term *ahl al-dhimma* can be traced to the legal disputations that occurred in Iraq in the late second/end of the eighth century about the fiscal status of the subjected peoples (e.g., Abū Yūsuf's *Kitāb al-kharāj*). This discussion involved the citing of *ḥadīth*s; the Egyptian *ḥadīth* material cited in the *Futūḥ* was probably a reflection of this discussion being brought into or conducted within Egypt. The new designation *ahl al-dhimma*, which is used indiscriminately by modern scholars to refer to the Christian population of Egypt, is thus inaccurate and, as has been shown, refers to a specific episode in conquest history, when the tax-paying Egyptians could not be simply classified as 'people of the earth'.

The late appearance of *qbṭ* in the vocabulary of the Muslim administrators is striking. Why had it become necessary to adopt a Greek word to describe the people who had been previously described as the 'people of the custody', a term that had been widely used across the Islamic empire? Why did it only then become important to distinguish the indigenous Christians from their counterparts across the empire? What exactly did this new term mean? Did it mean 'Egyptian', regardless of religious inclination, embracing Muslims, Chalcedonians, non-Chalcedonians, and Jews?

This question is complicated and cannot be answered on the basis of papyrological evidence alone. First, the late appearance of the word 'Copt' is not necessarily an indication that there was no earlier conception of the Copts as having a unique ethnic, religious, and linguistic identity. Rather, what it does demonstrate is that there was no need to articulate such an identity in the writing of the earlier periods of the conquest.

One must therefore examine the third/ninth-century historical context in order to understand the emergence of this new category. At the most basic level, the need to articulate *qbṭ* as a distinctive collective identity was due in part to the threat to the native communities that began to arise from increasing rates of conversion.[55] Secondly, if Patricia Crone's arguments about *mawālī* are

53. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, chap. 2.

54. Ibid. *Kharāj* was the land tax imposed on the non-Arab population, and *sadaqa* was a religious duty placed on the Arab Muslims, which was levied at a much lower rate than that paid by the Copts.

55. Scholarship on conversion has been limited, and rates of conversion have proven very difficult to measure. Bulliet's study, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Harvard, 1979), which is not as good for Egypt as it is for Persia, provides a sufficient general chronological framework.

indeed correct, *qbṭ* may have been a derogatory term for such people. The slave girl Ṣafra mentioned above seems to have been a convert, as her Arabic and Coptic names are both given. Indeed, it is among converts that this new term may have been born, as they would have sought to describe themselves using a Greek term with which they may have been familiar, but Greek writing seems to have disappeared by 180/797, so it is difficult to see why this term reappeared in a corrupt version by the third/ninth century.

The late appearance of the word *qbṭ* may perhaps be explained by events further east. A renewed cultural confidence—if not independence—was blossoming amongst non-Arab intellectuals in the ʿAbbāsid capital. Poets and orators of Persian descent celebrated their pre-Arab past, some going so far as to claim cultural superiority over their Arab overlords. As the older legal distinctions between conquerors and conquered were erased, new cultural distinctions were being created.

Although by no means the full-blown movement most scholars claim it was, this debate produced tremors that were felt as far away as Egypt.[56] The debate produced distinctions—pertinent throughout the empire—between those Arab Muslims whose identity was biologically defined, *qabāʾil*, and their non-Arab counterparts, *shuʿūb,* whose identity was territorially defined.[57] Perhaps the word 'Copt' was coined to describe the people of Egypt, whose identity was anchored in a territory, at once distinct from other *shuʿūb* within the empire and from the Arab *qabīla* at large. But given the scarcity of evidence, it is impossible to establish any causality between the debates occurring in the imperial capital with the neologisms coined at the periphery, nor is it possible to determine the significance or scale of those debates. It may simply be that a similar, but independent, debate was occurring in Egypt of which only hints survive: the term *qawm* (nation, people) was used by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam to describe the Copts.[58]

By contrast, the use of the term *ʿajam* was limited to legal documents. It appears to have been imported sometime in the third/ninth century from the eastern provinces of the empire. Originally meaning 'foreign' in a broad sense, the term came to refer to Persians only after the third/ninth century. It is surprising that this term designating foreignness should appear in the Arab administrative vocabulary centuries after the conquest. Its limited use, restricted to legal documents, suggests that it denoted a new legal category that was brought to, or emerged in, Egypt sometime early in the fourth/tenth century, as the legal schools emerged. Again, there is no way of proving this, so it must remain hypothetical.

56. Crone, 'Mawlā'.

57. R. Mottahedeh, 'The Shuʿûbîyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran', *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 7 (1976), 161–82, at 167–70.

58. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest,* 4–5.

It was also in the third/ninth century—and for related reasons—that a preoccupation with physical appearance and ethnicity emerges. The word *jins*—derived from the Greek γένος, for 'genus' or 'type' but often meaning 'ethnicity' more broadly—appears on papyrus for the first time. The first recorded use of the word is in the sale act of a black slave, in which the scribe writes that she is 'd'espèce [*wa-jinssaha*] *qūmatiyya*'.[59] Similarly, a Nubian slave is described as having the *jins* of a black, Christian foreigner (*ʿajamī*). Both these documents date from the late second/eighth to early third/ninth centuries, and there are no similar documents from an earlier period with which we can compare them.

The slave contracts of this period often record the skin colour of their subjects, as well as their *jins*, an all-encompassing term that referred not only to skin colour but also to place of origin, religion, and language. *ʿAjamī*, in this context, must be taken as a reference to language, as it is in this way that it is used in the legal texts of the Fayyūm, at a slightly later date. *Jins* is never used to describe the Copts in the documentary texts, although the *ḥadīth*s cited in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's text above demonstrate a preoccupation with the Copts' 'curly and crinkly hair'.

Conclusion

The *Futūḥ* was written at a historical moment significantly different from that which it purports to describe. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam composed his text in a period in which the once firm and fixed categories of the Muslim, Arab soldier on the one hand, and the Christian, Egyptian peasant on the other, were in flux. At the same time, the group to which Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam belonged—the Egyptian Arab elite—was increasingly faced with the lowering of its own status. The position of the members of this elite was being usurped by new arrivals from the East, undermining their status both at home and within the wider imperial order; the last two judges described in the *Futūḥ* are from Basra and Damascus.[60] This moment of rupture and dislocation becomes the focus of an important process of re-imagining Egypt. It was necessary to formulate a uniquely non-Pharaonic Egypt; unlike the Persians who looked back to the Sassanids, Egypt could not look to its ancient heyday, because Pharaoh does not fare well in the Qurʾan. The Egyptian landscape itself was re-charted: Muqaṭṭam Mountain, which had been a Coptic holy site, was expropriated by the Muslims. Likewise, the etymology of al-Fayyūm was reinvented, linking it to Yūsuf of the Old Testament world, common to Muslims and Christians

59. Y. Ragib, 'P.Cam Michaelides inv. B. 152', in *Actes de vente d'esclaves et d'animaux d'Egypte médiévale* (Cairo 2002), 14.

60. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *History of the Conquest*, 247.

alike. Egyptian localism did not hark back to Pharaonic ideals but rather to Biblical ones.[61] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam was a pivotal participant in this process of re-imagining Egypt. The replacement of the Egyptian Arabs by an imported Turkic elite is his text's implicit subject; it is both a eulogy and an elegy for his class. In his account, Egypt's Islamic history is married with its non-Arab past. What would, in the old schema, have been a paradox is now a possibility: a provincial identity that is at once Arab and non-Arab.

It is a common theme of this collection that moments of turmoil—particularly in people's sense of identity and status—result in heightened concern for issues of origins, descent, and inheritance. The third/ninth-century Islamic empire was no different in its expressions of this kind of genealogical anxiety. For example, al-Kindī describes the material measures that men took to 'prove' their Arabness in Egypt.[62] And Egypt's Arab elites—so obsessed with kinship and descent—vied to inscribe Egypt in Islam's spiritual family tree. Indeed, across the empire, cultural conflict raged between Muslims: provincial elites were competing for spiritual superiority—and, by extension, cultural independence—by looking back towards, and drawing upon, their pre-Arab pasts.

With the use of literary and documentary evidence, I have suggested why it is that an atmosphere of fervent regionalism in the ninth-century Islamic empire led to the emergence of a uniquely Egyptian ethno-linguistic identity—and why it was called 'Copt'.

61. M. Cook, 'Pharaonic History in Medieval Egypt', *Studia Islamica* 57 (1983), 67–103.
62. Al-Kindī, *The Governors and Judges*, 397–9, 413.

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Forgetting Ctesiphon

Iran's Pre-Islamic Past, c. 800–1100

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'Ruining that which has been developed is easier than developing that which has been ruined; breaking goblets is easier than mending them'.[1]

In today's world it often seems that no Muslim country feels more divided about its past than Iran. The causes have much to do with the modern nation itself, particularly its shifting ideology, relations with neighbours, and aspirations in religion, culture, and society. Some parties have cherished romantic and nostalgic views of the pre-Islamic past. The Pahlavis, for instance, glorified the Sasanian kings as icons of national grandeur, and some present-day dissidents go so far as to wish away the past 1,400 years of Islam. At the other extreme, some supporters of the present regime have labelled even academic interest in Iran's pre-Islamic history as 'un-Islamic' and disloyal.[2]

Such divisions have a long history and have played a major role in shaping our knowledge of Iran during the centuries before and just after the Muslim conquests. Our understanding of the pre-Islamic period is dependent on Arabic and Persian sources from roughly the mid-second/eighth through the fifth/eleventh centuries, when historical knowledge, recorded in Pahlavi, was translated into Arabic and New Persian in ʿAbbāsid Iraq and Persian and Turkish

1. A statement by the Sasanian minister Buzurgmihr to Khusraw Anūshirvān (r. 531–79), regarding friends and enemies, in *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings (Naṣīḥat al-mulūk)*, trans. F. R. C. Bagley (London, 1964), 135. Cited by P. Crone, 'Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes? On the Authorship of *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*', in *From Kavād to al-Ghazālī: Religion, Law and Political Thought in the Near East, c.600–c.1100* (Aldershot, 2005), 188, n.149. I would like to thank Richard Payne, Philip Wood, and Fatemeh Shams Esmaeili for reading this chapter and offering constructive comments.

2. See esp. M. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (Basingstoke and New York, 2001), esp. 96–112, and his 'Historiography and Crafting Iranian National Identity', in T. Atabaki (ed.), *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London and New York, 2009), 5–21.

imperial capitals. At that time, Iran's history was, on the one hand, interpreted teleologically as leading to Islam, while, on the other hand, it was regarded as a problematic inheritance, to be recalled and handled with care. Traditionists of this era felt an ambivalence analogous to that experienced by many Iranians today: a mixture of nostalgia and admiration for the ancient past, coupled with pride in the Muslim conquests, governments, and cultural institutions that surpassed it.[3]

Not surprisingly, these Arabic and Persian sources are highly selective in what they recall about Iran's pre-Islamic past. Modern historians have laboured to construct a balanced and objective narrative, often with a struggle, such as when they have outlined the contents of the late-Sasanian *Khudāy-nāmag* or have discerned a confederacy of Pārsīg and Pahlav dynastic families before and after the conquests.[4] In general, they have devoted less energy to understanding the reasons for this selectiveness and mapping the boundaries of knowledge possibly available in the Arabic and Persian sources. Admittedly, this is a more difficult task, for it involves taking on problems of historical amnesia and omissions, and charting a territory defined by absence.

Bearing in mind this volume's focus on a 'long Late Antiquity', this chapter suggests a more discontinuous picture and a pattern according to which much of the Sasanian-era heritage of Iraq and Iran was forgotten. We can understand both the circumstances and the implications of this forgetfulness by looking at the case of Ctesiphon, the former Sasanian capital in Iraq, which held an ambivalent place in the ideologies of successor regimes as well as in the general landscape of historical memory. Much was forgotten concerning its origins, pre-Islamic history, and topography. But Ctesiphon, and the past in general, was not simply left out of memory; rather, it was erased. Due to ambivalent attitudes toward Iran's pre-Islamic past, traditionists made Ctesiphon into an expressive relic. Its empire may have been destroyed and surpassed, but its very persistence focused reflection on a great civilisation. The case of Ctesiphon broadly suggests the material and ideological conditions under which historians crafted their works, the affective aspects of historiography, and the ways that our sources obscure and efface past knowledge. By contrast, there persists an inadequately thought-out confidence in the Arabic sources for Islamic and Iranian history, and a failure to account for either their ʿAbbāsid-era contexts or the coincidence of Iran's conversion to Islam during roughly the time of their composition. Ctesiphon is also pertinent, I believe, to modern instances

3. For further development of the argument advanced in this chapter, see my *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

4. P. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London and New York, 2008). Pourshariati does much to explain the suppression of Parthian voices.

of forgetfulness, as a reminder of issues surrounding interpretations of pre-Islamic history that endure until today.

The Ancient City Recedes from Memory

As archaeological and literary evidence has shown, Ctesiphon was founded in the first century BC by the Parthians, approximately 20 miles southeast of modern Baghdad, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, opposite ancient Seleucia. Strabo explained its origins as the Parthians' winter residence, mentioning their wish to spare the residents of Seleucia the burden of housing their corps of Scythian soldiers. Pliny believed that the town was founded to draw away the population of Seleucia, which, by the early third century was deserted, while Ctesiphon stood unrivaled. It was an important Jewish centre mentioned in the Talmud, and prominent Christians hailed from it. Under the Sasanians, it was a local administrative centre and home to the old royal residence (called by Arabs al-Qaṣr al-Abyaḍ, 'the White Palace'), dated to the reign of Khusraw I Anūshirvān (r. 531–79). Under Khusraw II Aparvīz, in 607–8, a royal treasury was established, in which the Holy Cross was reportedly deposited after it was taken from the Romans at the capture of Jerusalem in 614.

South of Ctesiphon, also on the eastern bank, lay the residential district of Asbānbar, which flourished in the late Sasanian period and where the Sasanians, probably under Khusraw Anūshirvān, built a huge palace, of which the facade and an arched hall known as the Īwān of Kisrā, still stand. Asbānbar was also home to a Sasanian treasury and possibly a mint, as well as a game preserve and stables. There was also a town the Arabs called al-Rūmiyya on the eastern bank, built by Khusraw Anūshirvān on the model of Antioch and used to house prisoners taken by him from Antioch in 540. On the western bank, Beh-Ardashīr, known by Arabs as Bihrasīr, was founded in about 230 by the first Sasanian king, Ardashīr I (r. 226–41). It housed the residence of the Jewish exilarch and the cathedral church of the 'Nestorian' catholicos, who moved to Baghdad after 145/762.[5]

5. There is an extensive literature on the material remains and history of Ctesiphon and its neighbours. Among other sources for this chapter, see J. M. Upton, 'The Expedition to Ctesiphon, 1931–1932', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 27/8 (1932), 188–97; O. Kurz, 'The Date of the Ṭāq i Kisrā', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1941), 37–41; J. M. Fiey, 'Topography of al-Mada'in (Seleucia-Ctesiphon area)', *Sumer* 23/1-2 (1967), 3–38; M. Streck and M. Morony, 'al-Madā'in', *EI2*; J. Kröger, 'Ctesiphon', *EIr*; E. J. Keall, 'Parthian Architecture', *EIr*; D. Huff, 'Architecture. iii. Sasanian Period', *EIr*, and Morony, 'Beh-Ardašīr', *EIr*. On the mint, Hodge Mehdi Malek, 'A Seventh Century Hoard of Sasanian Drachms', *Iran* 31 (1993), 77–93, at 79. The name 'Kisrā' is applied generally by the Arabic sources to the Sassanian kings, including Khusraw Anūshirvān and Khusraw Aparvīz (r. 591–628).

The area was conquered by the Arabs in the 630s and remained in their control as the last Sasanian emperor, Yazdagird III (r. 632–51), began an epic flight, which ended with his death in Khurasan in 651. Al-Madāʾin—'the cities', a translation of the Aramaic term Māḥōzē (metropolis)[6]—the name by which the Arabs knew Ctesiphon, Asbānbar, al-Rūmiyya, and their environs, briefly served them as an administrative centre until the founding of Kufa in 16/638, after which it remained linked to Kufa but apparently declined significantly. Still, coins bearing the mint name 'al-Madāʾin' continued to be struck into ʿAbbāsid times.[7] In the sixth-seventh/twelfth-thirteenth centuries, a small settlement remained on the eastern bank. Several sites within the area of the metropolis have been excavated by German, British, American, and Italian archaeologists, and impressive artifacts are housed across Europe and in the United States.

Despite the importance of Iraq under the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid dynasties—and even though Arabic sources provide our most convincing literary evidence—by the late ninth century most details of Ctesiphon's origins, early history, and topography had been forgotten. Early Arabic sources refer to it in ways suggesting its displacement. It is *al-madīna al-ʿatīqa* (the ancient city). As for the details: When was Ctesiphon founded, and by whom? What monuments were located there, as opposed to in the other cities? Was the White Palace joined to the Īwān of Kisrā? That the Arabs referred to the entirety of the Sasanian metropolis, of which Ctesiphon represented one piece, as al-Madāʾin, and to Ctesiphon itself as al-Madāʾin, only added to the confusion—and which cities constituted the *madāʾin*? Were the cities located on both sides of the Tigris or on the eastern side only?[8]

Al-Yaʿqūbī's (fl. second half of the third/ninth century) frequently cited entry for al-Madāʾin exemplifies the form and limits of such knowledge, with its bird's-eye view of Sasanian times. He provides a few choice details for each of the *madāʾin*, balancing pre- and post-conquest history:

> Al-Madāʾin was the seat of Persia's kings and was founded by [Khusraw] Anūshirvān. It consists of several cities on the banks of the Tigris. On the

6. R. N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia: The Arabs in the East* (New York, 1975), 8, and Kröger, 'Ctesiphon'.

7. N. Lowick, *Early Abbasid Coinage: A Type Corpus (132–218 H/AD 750–833)*, ed. E. Savage (London, 1999), 150–1.

8. On confusions in the Arabic sources regarding Ctesiphon, see especially S. A. El Ali, '*al-Madāʾin fī al-maṣādir al-ʿArabiyya*', *Sumer* 23 (1967), 47–67 and 'Al-Madāʾin and Its Surrounding Area in Arabic Literary Sources', *Mesopotamia* 3-4 (1968–9), 417–39. Also, G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1905; 2006), 33–5; Fiey, 'Topography of Madaʾin', 9–11; Keall, 'Ayvān-e Kesrā (or Ṭāq-e Kesrā)', *EIr*, and H. Kennedy, 'From Shahristan to Medina', *Studia Islamica*, 102–3 (2006), 5–34, at 13.

> eastern bank is the city that is called 'the ancient [city]' (*al-ʿatīqa*), in which there is the old White Palace, whose builder is not known, and the congregational mosque, which was built by the Muslims at the conquest. Also on the eastern bank is the city named Asbānbar, in which is the great Īwān of Kisrā, of which the Persians have nothing similar, its roof rising 80 cubits. Between the two cities there is a distance of a mile. In this city [of Asbānbar], Salmān al-Fārisī and Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān settled, and their graves are in it. Adjacent to these two cities is a city called al-Rūmiyya, built, it is said, by the Romans when they conquered the kingdom of Persia. It was there that the *amīr al-muʾminīn* al-Manṣūr [r. 136–58/754–75] was when he killed Abū Muslim. There is only about two or three miles distance between these three cities. On the western bank . . .[9]

Here the focus is on the observable, the Old White Palace and the Īwān, but history before Khusraw Anūshirvān is washed away. The origins of al-Rūmiyya are confused. With the congregational mosque, the establishment of al-Madāʾin as a Muslim city is noted. Muslim associations afterwards are also noted, particularly the graves of Muḥammad's companions.

When writers venture to account for Ctesiphon's more antique origins, they often cite mythical figures, including Hūshang or Jamshīd, as its founders.[10] According to another line of thinking, it was founded by Zāb, a mythical Persian king who dug tributaries of the Tigris that were afterward named for him. Zāb was claimed both in the line of Farīdūn, and, more unusually, as a descendant of Noah.[11] These statements all carry a speculative air; Yāqūt, for example, guessed that successive Iranian kings occupied the area, each founding his own city.[12]

Historical circumstances also promoted forgetfulness. There is little reason to doubt that the conquests brought suffering that led to emigration and a decline in the population of the area.[13] The Arabs did not make it a major

9. Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. A. Juynboll (Leiden, 1861), 107.

10. Al-Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-l-taʾrīkh* (Port Said, n.d.), 4:98–9; Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb Taʾrīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ wa-l-anbiyāʾ*, trans. U. M. Daudpota (Bombay, 1932), 18 and 20, and El Ali, 'Al-Madāʾin and Its Surrounding Area', 422–9.

11. Al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-l-taʾrīkh*, 4:98–9, and Yāqūt, 'al-Madāʾin', in *Muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld as *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1866–73), 4:445–7. For descent from Noah, see Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwal*, ed. ʿIṣām Muḥammad al-Ḥajj ʿAlī (Beirut, 2001), 46–7.

12. Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 4:446. See also J. Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1970), 128ff.

13. R. McC. Adams, *Land Behind Baghdad: A History of Settlement on the Diyala Plains* (Chicago and London, 1965), 84–111; Lassner, *Topography of Baghdad*, 164–8, and P. Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries* (Chicago and London, 2001), 95.

settlement, complaining about the unsuitability of the climate of al-Madāʾin for their camels and sheep.[14] With the growth of Kufa, Basra, and later Baghdad, Ctesiphon *was* surpassed, as many people left al-Madāʾin for these newer cities. In the fourth/tenth century, al-Muqaddasī describes al-Madāʾin as just one of several towns near Baghdad and has little more to say about it.[15]

Even if the impressive detritus of al-Madāʾin demanded explanation, with the passage of time and the death of those who had known it in Sasanian times, the city offered few clues to its origins or early history. Compared with Syria, for example, far less epigraphic evidence survives for Sasanian Iran.[16] Centuries later, in 1827, Robert Mignan, in the service of the East India Company, came upon the 'Tauk Kesra' (Pers., Ṭāq-i Kisrā, 'Arch of Kisrā'), which he described as 'a magnificent monument of antiquity, surprising the spectator with the perfect state of its preservation, after having braved the warring elements for so many ages; without an emblem to throw any light upon its history; without proof, or character to be traced on any brick or wall'.[17]

In terms of the literary record, surprisingly little history of Ctesiphon's material remains passed through the Sasanian-era sources into Arabic, and, as is often noted, these Sasanian sources themselves appear to have been impoverished. One might have expected to find Ctesiphon's early history detailed in the *Khudāy-nāmag* or in the various strands of Arabic literature dealing with cities and their histories—accounts of the conquests, geographical literature, local histories, and the like—but this was apparently not the case.[18] Even in Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāma*, which draws on Sasanian historiography, Baghdad is at times anachronistically favoured over Ctesiphon as a residence of Iran's kings.[19]

Surprising as these facts may seem to a modern reader, we must acknowledge that neither the city's decline nor the gap in the historical record were preordained. Ctesiphon might instead have lived on in reality and in memory. Al-Madāʾin might have been absorbed into a new, enlarged metropolis, as occurred in Egypt, with the establishment of Fustat. Even if its most ancient history had not survived, its Sasanian history might have

14. Reported widely, e.g., Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1967–8), 1:129, and Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, ed. S. Okacha (Cairo, 1960), 564. Also, El Ali, 'Al-Madāʾin and Its Surrounding Area', 419.

15. Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1877), 122.

16. Kennedy, 'From Shahristan to Medina', 7–9. Among Kennedy's sources, N. Pigulevskaja, *Les villes de l'état Iranien aux époques parthe et sassanide: Contribution à l'histoire sociale de la basse antiquité*, ed. P. Lemerle (Paris, 1963), 93–7.

17. R. Mignan, *Travels in Chaldæa, including a Journey from Bussorah to Bagdad, Hillah, and Babylon, Performed on Foot in 1827, with Observations on the Sites and Remains of Babel, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon* (London, 1829), 71.

18. On this point, see El Ali, 'Al-Madāʾin and Its Surrounding Area', 418.

19. Already noted by T. Nöldeke, *Das Iranische Nationalepos* (Berlin, 1920), no. 39.

captured the imagination. Historians, geographers, and travellers might also have made more note of its current, lived conditions: its walls, waterways, quarters, major buildings, and flora and fauna. The Prophet's city, Medina, can serve as a particularly strong point of comparison. There, as Harry Munt has argued in this volume, historians such as Ibn Zabāla sought to record a vanishing pre-Islamic topography. This interest in the physical setting of Medina endured for centuries and was integral to many accounts of the town's pre-Islamic history.

To be sure, one *can* gather from the Arabic sources significant knowledge about al-Madāʾin, both in pre-and early Islamic times, as Michael Morony has done meticulously in his *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (1984), where he provides a significant account of late Sasanian Iraq, its administrative geography, theory, and practice. Major historical works, including the histories of al-Balādhurī (d. c. 279/892) and al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), elucidate such matters, which had continuing relevance to the empire.[20] This is not to say, however, that ʿAbbāsid traditionists had detailed historical or visual knowledge of the site that lay only a few miles from Baghdad.

The View from Baghdad: Al-Khaṭīb Remembers a City Surpassed

Arabic sources often provide clues that help explain their failings. As producers of narrative, collectors of biographical, geographical, and topographic detail, and advisors to rulers, their authors were sensitive to the limitations of their sources. As members of their societies, they were also aware of the underlying material and literary conditions and anxieties. They worked around gaps and omissions, responding with editorial choices of content, arrangement, anecdotes, and commentary. Their judgements on such matters may have represented their own interpretations, but they also reveal how educated members of society made sense of the past.

Several qualities suggest the sensitivity of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) as an observer of the literary and material record on al-Madāʾin. Working in fifth/eleventh-century Baghdad, he wrote from the centre of Arabic tradition, drew on and cited an extensive historical corpus, and had all the benefits that hindsight affords for putting the past in perspective. Al-Khaṭīb's *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* contained almost 8,000 biographies of scholars and other notables, from the city's foundation until his own day. But al-Khaṭīb's interest in Baghdad's predecessor al-Madāʾin is reflected in his introduction and first pages of

20. See, for example, Morony's discussion of the late Sasanian administrative bureaux at Madāʾin, 27 and n.2.

the text proper. To judge from his book, he had also visited the place; after all, it lay only a short distance from Baghdad.[21]

Al-Khaṭīb says that he will mention al-Madāʾin and the companions and descendants of the Prophet who settled there because of its proximity to his subject, Baghdad, and because of their connections to it. He expresses admiration for its history, rulers, environment, buildings, and population. In ancient times, it won the affection of Persia's kings, who were 'skilled in administration and government and insightful when it came to realms and choosing residences', and all of them chose al-Madāʾin and its environs because of the 'healthiness of its soil and the purity of its air', and because the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates lay nearby. In the earliest days of Islam, the Prophet envisaged it under Muslim rule: 'Whichever of my companions dies in a land [far away], will be the light [of its inhabitants] and their leader until the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*)'. It was said that, 'He named al-Madāʾin because of the extent of what the kings and *kisrā*s (*al-mulūk wa-l-akāsira*) built there'. His companions shared his admiration, as the likes of Salmān al-Fārisī and Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān settled there.

In specifying what these rulers left, al-Khaṭīb gives his own bird's-eye view, which shares al-Yaʿqūbī's ignorance regarding the White Palace:

> It is located on both the east and west banks of the Tigris, with the Tigris cutting through it. The eastern city is named *al-ʿatīqa* ('the ancient [city]'). In it is the old White Palace, whose builder is not known. Adjacent to it is the city known as Asbānbar, in which the kings dwelled and in which there is the Īwān. As for the western city, it is called Bihrasīr. Alexander, the most exalted of the world's kings, dwelt there. It is said that he is Dhū al-Qarnayn, whom God mentioned in His Book [the Qurʾan]. . . . He reached the eastern parts of the world, and the western ones, and left his mark in every region. . . . Still, [among all his cities] he did not choose a place to dwell equalling al-Madāʾin. So he dwelt there, and built a great

21. As a rival, Baghdad is the point of focus here, but it is also likely that, in Umayyad times, memory was winnowed down by traditionists with different loyalties, especially to Damascus and Jerusalem. The evidence for Umayyad-era attitudes is poor; see the remarks of A. Borrut, 'La "Memoria" Omeyyade: Les Omeyyades entre souvenir et oubli dans les sources narratives islamiques', in A. Borrut and P. M. Cobb (eds.), *Umayyad Legacies: Medieval Memories from Syria to Spain* (Leiden, 2010). Also, Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: L'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides* (v. 72–193/692–809) (Leiden, 2011). On al-Khaṭīb and his affiliations, see R. Sellheim, 'al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī', *EI2*, and Lassner, 'Notes on the Topography of Baghdad: The Systematic Descriptions of the City and the Khatīb al-Baghdādī', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83/4 (1963), 458–69. For a translation of al-Khaṭīb's reporting on al-Madāʾin, see *L'Introduction topographique à l'histoire de Bagdādh d'Aboū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Thābit al-Khatīb al-Bagdādhī*, trans. G. Salmon (Paris, 1904), 175–81.

> city, encircled by a wall, the trace of which remains to our day. This is the city called al-Rūmiyya, located on the east bank of the Tigris.[22]

In the west, Alexander built Alexandria. In 'upper' Khurasan, he built Samarqand and 'the city' of Sogdiana (Bukhara?). In 'lower' Khurasan, he built Merv and Herat. In the Jibāl, he built Jayy, the town of Iṣfahān. And he built many other cities across the earth. The favour he showed al-Madā'in speaks well for its history in pre-Islamic times, as does the Prophet's statement and the interpretation offered.

While Baghdad can claim a share of its neighbour's glorious past, al-Khaṭīb's deeper motivations for writing about al-Madā'in come through in a story near the end of his introduction that relates to the founding of Baghdad by the second ʿAbbāsid caliph, al-Manṣūr. When he came to power in 136/754, demolition of the Īwān was already under way; his companions urged him to continue it, but one of his Persian secretaries flattered him, saying:

> O Amīr al-Muʾminīn! You know from what sort of village—meaning Medina—the Messenger of God came, and what sort of dwelling he had in it, and what sort of stone his companions had [for their dwellings]. Then the companions of that Messenger went out until they reached the lord of this Īwān, in spite of their weakness and his power and the toughness of his rule. They conquered him, took it forcibly from his hands. Then they killed him. And so [today], anyone who comes from the corners of the earth looks upon the city and this Īwān and knows that the [village]'s lord conquered the lord of this Īwān. There can be no doubting that it was by the command of God, and that it is He who aided him and who accompanied him and his companions. It will therefore glorify you to leave it.[23]

In the event, al-Manṣūr did not heed the secretary's advice and continued the demolition. When he was then advised that it was proving too costly, he sent again for the secretary—identified elsewhere as Khālid, a member of the illustrious Iranian Barmakid family—who now advised him to press on, or men would say that he was too feeble to tear down what the Persian kings had built. Al-Manṣūr thought about it and realised that the secretary spoke the truth, but when he investigated the matter, he knew that he would be ruined financially were he to follow the advice. So, he disregarded his secretary once again.

Certainly, al-Khaṭīb told an entertaining story about Baghdad and its construction, but equally, he provided a metaphor reflecting anxiety about al-Madā'in as Baghdad's great predecessor and as a site inspiring problematic

22. Al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* (Cairo, 1931), 1:127–8.
23. Ibid. 1:130–1.

loyalties: the past imperial capital could not simply be taken down, and leaving it standing would not be satisfactory. Leaving it might testify to the success of the ʿAbbāsids, but it might also undo them for their failure to prove it surpassed.

The account circulated widely, demonstrating the metaphor's resonance in ʿAbbāsid society. The details varied, but al-Manṣūr's failure and the metaphor stood firm. Even when traditions reversed the outcome, emphasising the caliphs' supremacy over Iran's ancient kings, the desire to prove al-Madāʾin surpassed remained.[24] When residents of al-Madāʾin received permission to build new homes in Kufa, they took with them the doors of their dwellings and re-hung them on their new dwellings.[25] Much later, the ʿAbbāsids al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 279–89/892–902) and his son, al-Muktafī (r. 289–95/902–8) took the last remaining materials of the White Palace for a palace they built in Baghdad.[26] The ʿAbbāsids built on the site of a palace belonging to Khālid's son's Jaʿfar, whom the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, more than a century earlier had dispossessed of his property and beheaded, ending the family's era at court.[27]

In al-Ṭabari's earlier version, al-Manṣūr asked Khālid for his opinion on demolishing 'the *city* of the Īwān of Kisrā at al-Madāʾin' (*madīnat Īwān Kisrā bi-l-Madāʾin*), for the purpose of taking its rubble for re-use; the account goes on to specify the White Palace (al-Qaṣr al-Abyaḍ) as a target, not the Īwān.[28] This suggests that the anecdote was originally about the White Palace, but it worked better in al-Khaṭīb's day to imagine the Īwān as the object, because the White Palace was gone, thanks to al-Muʿtaḍid and al-Muktafī. That is, al-Khaṭīb, and the line of historical thought he represented, strove to keep the object of attack alive.

24. And so, the Arab conqueror Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ is said to have built for himself at Kufa a residence modelled on the palace of Ctesiphon and to have had the gates of Beh-Ardashir re-erected at the entrance to his own dwelling. Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together*, 48, and Fiey, 'Topography of Mada'in', 6. This account reflects a memory recorded in Syriac. As the anonymous Nestorian *Khuzistan Chronicle* reports: 'When the Catholicos Ishoʿyahb saw that Mahoze had been devastated by the Tayyaye and that they had carried off its gates to Aqula [Kufa] and that those who remained there were wasting away from hunger, he left and took up residence in Beth Garmai, in the town of Karka'. *Chronicon anonymum*, ed. and trans. I. Guidi, in *Chronica Minora* I (Paris, 1903). I thank Sebastian P. Brock for sharing his unpublished English translation with me.

25. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1879–1901), ser. 1, vol. 5:2497.

26. Fiey, 'Topography of Mada'in', 11, and Streck and Morony, 'al-Madāʾin'.

27. 'Al-Taj', in Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 1:806–9.

28. *Madīnat īwān kisrā bi-l-Madāʾin* is the preferred reading of Kennedy, although he uses a variant (B) in the Leiden edition, which prefers *binā' madīnat īwān kisrā bi-l-Madāʾin*. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. 3, vol. 1:320–1, and *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, ed. I. Abbas, trans. Kennedy. Vol. 29, *Al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī* (Albany, 1990), 4–5. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī-l-taʾrīkh* (Beirut, n.d.; reprint of 1851–76 edition with corrections and index), 5:224–6, 231–2. There, al-Manṣūr asks about demolishing *al-Madāʾin wa-īwān kisrā* but orders the destruction of the White Palace. A memory of the White Palace as a target lived on. The accounts of al-Ṭabarī and al-Khaṭīb are frequently mentioned in secondary literature, without reference to the difference in target.

Al-Madāʾin posed at least two challenges in the period after the conquests that are addressed throughout Arabic historiography, including in al-Khaṭīb's text. Although times had changed by his day, these challenges remained, making it an appropriate locale for addressing them. First, in an empire where the capital city mattered enormously, al-Madāʾin represented a competing focal point. Second, as something of an ʿAlīd center, it was a problem for its Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid governors.

Regarding the first, al-Madāʾin remained an important symbolic centre and focus for opposition movements. As al-Yaʾqūbī mentioned, al-Manṣūr was at al-Rūmiyya when he killed Abū Muslim. The Arabic sources generally place al-Manṣūr at al-Madāʾin at this time. Al-Manṣūr's choice of locale has been used to show al-Madāʾin as a continuing caliphal interest, but it does seem an unusual choice, given that the centre of gravity in the early ʿAbbāsid empire lay elsewhere in Iraq.[29] One wonders, rather, whether, when al-Manṣūr visited Abū Muslim in Merv, he found his palace too redolent of al-Madāʾin and wished to reinforce this point? Killing him in al-Rūmiyya would make the caliph, rather than Abū Muslim, heir to the Sasanians and their cities. Al-Manṣūr would not have been paranoid, as later challengers to ʿAbbāsid rule drew al-Madāʾin into their claims to a Sasanian heritage. Sources record that, in the chaotic conditions that prevailed in the Caspian region at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, the rebel Mardāvīj ibn Ziyār (d. 323/935) had a throne of gold made for himself and a crown decorated like Kisrā's, and he set out for Iraq, seeking to conquer it, the buildings of al-Madāʾin, and the dwellings and homes of Kisrā. When he did that, he would be addressed as 'Shāhanshāh' and rule a Zoroastrian kingdom.[30] While other challengers, such as the Daylamī Būyids, may not have claimed al-Madāʾin as a capital, it could be invoked in other ways as part of an Iranian heritage to undermine an Arab and Islamic one. When the Būyid ʿAḍud al-Dawla conquered Baghdad in 364/975, he was eulogised by Abū Naṣr ibn Nubāta in a poem that stated that he had 'dressed' the Īwān of Madāʾin with splendour, and that labelled him the hero and heir to the glory of the Sasanian kings.[31]

Al-Madāʾin's destruction, particularly at the time of the conquests, is elaborated in emphatic ways that belong to a wider narrative about the success of Islam and its representatives, especially rulers, over previous political and social systems. This teleology is widespread in Arabic historiography as a whole

29. Streck and Morony, 'al-Madāʾin'.

30. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh*, 7:111; W. Madelung, 'The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids and the "Reign of the Daylam (Dawlat al-Daylam)"', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28/2 (1969), 84–108, at 87–8; C. E. Bosworth, 'Mardāwīd̲j', *EI2*; J. J. Donohue, 'Three Buwayhid inscriptions', *Arabica* 20 (1973), 74–80, at 77, and *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq, 334H./945 to 403H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden, 2003), 3.

31. Madelung, 'The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh', 106.

and features several memorable events relating to al-Madāʾin. These include the night of Muḥammad's birth, when the battlements (*shurfa*) of the Īwān shook so hard that fourteen collapsed. At the same time, the Zoroastrians' fire in Fars (Istakhr, i.e., Persepolis) died out for the first time in a thousand years.[32] At the Battle of the Ditch, in Medina, the Prophet predicted the conquest of Persia when a spark from his axe permitted him to see the White Palace illuminated.[33] The Prophet dispatched a messenger to al-Madāʾin and to Kisrā, who tore up his letter.[34] In al-Ṭabarī's extensive account of the conquest, Salmān serves as a scout, inviting the inhabitants of the area to Islam, as the Muslims 'had nominated him to the function of middleman with the people of Persia'. He invited the people to Islam, noting their common origins.[35] When Saʿd [ibn Abī Waqqāṣ] entered al-Madāʾin, he saw that it was vacated:

> Finally, he came to the Īwān of Kisrā and began to recite, 'How many gardens and springs have they left, sown fields and noble places, blessings in which they took delight! The situation was thus. We bequeathed them to another people' [Qurʾan 44:25–8]. Then he performed a prayer ritual commemorating the conquest (*ṣalāt al-fatḥ*). [The normal] congregational prayer was not done. He performed eight *rakʿa*s (acts of prostration) without pauses between them and adopted it [the Īwān] as a place for prayer (*masjid*). There were plaster statues there, of men and horses, but that did not prevent Saʿd or the other Muslims [from praying there], and they were left as they were.[36]

This celebratory prayer marks the first moments of the city under the rule of Islam.

The many accounts of the spoils and the roles of particular individuals and tribes also belong to this narrative. The Arabs committed various faux pas—e.g., mistaking camphor for salt—revealing their naivety but also the purity of their motives and Islam. The spoils may have been splendid, but equally, the many references to them celebrate the conquest. They included a massive carpet, the *qiṭf*, known in Persian as the Bahār-i Khusraw ('The King's spring'), which was divided up—as was Khusraw's kingdom—and a large piece given to ʿAlī.[37] Khusraw's crown was seized by Saʿd and sent to Medina; it was later

32. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. 1, vol. 2:981.

33. Al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:131–2. The account is found in early commentaries on the Qurʾan; see Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta (Cairo, 1979–89), 3:477–8 (on Qurʾan 33:12).

34. Widely reported, as in, al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:132.

35. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. 1, vol. 5:2441.

36. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. 1, vol. 5:2443. I have consulted the translation of G. H. A. Juynboll, in *The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt* (Albany, 1989), esp. 23.

37. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. 1, vol. 5:2453–2454.

reportedly displayed in the Dome of the Rock. As Oleg Grabar has shown, the mosaics in the Dome of the Rock featuring the crown conveyed a message about the victory of Islam and the Islamic state over its opponents, including the Sasanians. The Dome spoke for its Muslim patrons and marked the arrival of Islam in Jerusalem, a city with a rich, monumental past, Byzantine in character.[38] Reporting on the crown's seizure and display, likewise, provided a literary counterpart to the material proof and reached a wider audience.[39]

Regarding the second challenge, in addressing al-Madā'in as an ʿAlīd city, al-Khaṭīb carefully negotiates claims by the Prophet's descendants. Although by his day the ʿAlīds of al-Madā'in must have posed little real challenge to the empire's stability, they had a history of associations with the metropolis, a fact likely to arouse suspicion. During al-Khaṭīb's lifetime, which coincided with the end of Būyid rule in Iraq and with Fāṭimid rule in Egypt and Syria, he found himself personally at odds with the Shīʿīs of Damascus.[40] In his book, he proclaims affection for the Prophet's family, including al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the Prophet's grandsons through ʿAlī and his daughter Fāṭima, and he cites traditions that grant legitimacy to ʿAlī's rule and support the family's continuing claims to nobility. Still, the caliphate is another matter, as he relates al-Ḥasan's profession of loyalty to the Umayyads in Syria, with al-Madā'in as the setting. As the widely reported story goes, after the death of ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn went to al-Madā'in. Al-Ḥasan stayed in the 'palace of al-Madā'in' (*qaṣr al-Madā'in*) for about forty nights, a topological number, and then went out to make peace with the caliph al-Muʿāwiya. Al-Ḥasan gathered the most eminent of his companions, and urged them,

> You have sworn allegiance to me that you would make peace with whomever I make peace with and that you would wage war with whomever I wage war with. I have sworn allegiance to Muʿāwiya, so listen to him and obey.[41]

While al-Madā'in may have been the site for such a profession, there is no reason that such an account need appear in a work dedicated to Baghdad and its history. Rather, it seems more appropriate to understand al-Khaṭīb and the historical tradition that he represents as linking al-Madā'in, as a surpassed city,

38. O. Grabar, 'The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem', *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959), 33–62, esp. 52, 57.

39. On the spoils generally, see A. Shalem, 'The Fall of Madā'in: Some Literary References Concerning Sassanian Spoils of War in Mediaeval Islamic Treasuries', *Iran* 32 (1994), 77–81, esp. 78–9. On the crown, see al-Wāsiṭī (fl. 410/1019), *Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, ed. I. Hasson (Jerusalem, 1979), 75–6, account no. 122, and N. Rabbat, 'The Dome of the Rock Revisited: Some Remarks on al-Wasiti's Accounts', *Muqarnas* 10 (1993), 67–75, esp. 71.

40. Sellheim, 'al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī'.

41. Al-Khaṭīb, *Ta'rīkh*, 1:139.

to ʿAlīd claims, with the implication that these too are surpassed. As an edifying story, the point is made that one should follow one's rulers, as al-Ḥasan did. As a setting, al-Madāʾin thus reinforces a Sunnī view of the caliphate against other current views.

Broadly speaking, such accounts represent al-Madāʾin as a city surpassed. To paraphrase Pierre Nora, it becomes a site of memory—about the conquests, their violence, and spoils, the early community and its achievements, rebellion and its suppression—in which the destruction of the city and elimination of its traces reinforce narratives about the rise of Islam, the founding of new cities, and the consolidation of political and religious authority.[42] Some recollections of Khālid's advice to al-Manṣūr would thus have him label the Īwān one of the *āyāt al-Islām*, 'signs' signifying the triumph of Islam.[43] Details in this narrative, including which monument al-Manṣūr wished to destroy (the Īwān or the White Palace), are of secondary importance.

While other developments, such as the rise of competing urban centres, made al-Madāʾin politically obsolete, its memory was also shaped by its Sasanian legacy and the ways that its Muslim—particularly ʿAbbāsid and Baghdadi—heirs struggled in its shadow against the challenges that it represented. These accounts, which occupy a significant place in Arabic literature, hardly seem interested in preserving objective or comprehensive knowledge about al-Madāʾin; rather, they confirm its oblivion.

Remembering an Unsurpassable City: Nostalgia for Iran's Past

More affectionate remembrances of the Sasanians and their political and cultural achievements also played a role in limiting knowledge about the metropolis. The lineage of nostalgia for al-Madāʾin, the Sasanians, and their ruins runs deep into ʿAbbāsid times, when Arabic poetry memorialised the city as a place of melancholy and loss whose grandeur could not be imitated or surpassed.

The most famous example is the *qaṣīda* of al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897), composed during the reign of al-Muntaṣir (r. 247–48/861–2) while the White Palace was still standing, featured in al-Buḥturī's *dīwān*, and cited throughout

42. For Nora, *lieux* are sites around which society's 'memory crystallizes and secretes itself', exemplified by places such as museums, archives, and cemeteries—but also many other 'devotional nostalgic institutions', ranging from the persons of Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, and Descartes to ideas about glory and dying for the fatherland; P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris, 1997). Also, 'Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*', *Representations* 26 (1989), 7–24, at 12.

43. E.g., al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-abrār wa-fuṣūṣ al-akhbār*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Diyāb and Ramaḍān ʿAbd al-Tawwāb (Cairo, 1992), 1:185. In al-Ṭabarī's account, the phrase *ʿalam min aʿlām al-Islām* probably refers to the White Palace. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. 3, vol. 1:320.

Arabic literature. It dwells on, and even exaggerates the ruin of, al-Madāʾin, as it connects the past majesty of its monuments to that of its unnamed builder, as Khālid said witnesses would do. Al-Buḥturī is attentive to al-Madāʾin's present state, and most importantly, its affective power. But for him, the ruins are positive reminders of a great, though vanished empire with which he identifies as a descendant of a people once allied it.

As Richard A. Serrano has shown, al-Buḥturī uses the old, pre-Islamic motif of the *aṭlāl* (traces of abandoned encampments), to refer to al-Madāʾin and the Sasanians:[44]

11. Worries were at my stopping place, so I turned
    My sturdy she-camel toward the White [Palace] of al-Madāʾin (*ilā abyaḍi l-madāʾini*),
12. Consoling myself with good fortune, and sorrowing
    At the traces of the camp of the clan of Sāsān.
13. Successive afflictions reminded me of them;
    Incidents make one remember, make one forget.
14. They were tranquil in the shadow of the dominating
    heights, the eyes dimming and wearing out,[45]
15. Its gate bolted against the mountains of al-Qabq,
    To the plateaus of Khilāṭ and Muks;
16. Camps that weren't like encampment traces of Suʿda
    In wastelands of smooth, barren soil,
17. And efforts which, if not for my partiality,
    The effort of ʿAns and ʿAbs could not equal.

The poet homologises al-Madāʾin—as a Persian 'camp' (*maḥall*) or 'camps' (*ḥilal*)—to the Bedouin encampment of Suʿda. The site of immediate reference is the White Palace; al-Buḥturī admires its ruins, even as he admits that his own 'partiality' for his Syrian ancestors, their allies, prevents him from giving them

44. I follow the translation of Serrano, 'Al-Buḥturī's Poetics of Persian Abodes', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28/1 (1997), 68–87, at 78–86. Serrano used the recension of A. J. Arberry, who also translated the poem, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge, 1965), 72–80. See also the fluent translation of A. M. Sumi, *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry: Waṣf, Ekphrasis, and Interarts Theory* (Leiden, 2004), 100–8. The *qaṣīda* is widely attested, including in al-Buḥturī's *Dīwān*, the latter published in multiple editions, including Ḥasan Kāmil al-Ṣayrafī, ed., 5 vols. (Cairo, 1963–68), 2:1152–1162, n.470.

45. Arberry and Sumi more correctly read the Arabic syntax as joining lines 13 and 14. Sumi (102–3) translates:

13. Continuous misfortunes remind me of them—
    misfortunes make people remember and forget—
14. When they dwelt in the shadow of a high lofty palace,
    So dazzling it weakens the eye.

their due—which he, in fact, does in the lines that follow. He also reflects on the ruins' former majesty contrasting with their present decrepitude, as he looks on:

18. Time has transported their age from freshness,
    Until garments became rags;
19. So that it is as if the Jirmāz, empty of people
    And disordered, is the edifice of a tomb;
20. If you saw it, you'd know that the nights
    Held in it a funeral, after a wedding feast,
21. While you are informed by the marvels of a people,
    The clarity in it unsullied by ambiguity.

The lines that follow feature the poet's imaginings: of a wall painting, depicting the Persian siege of the Byzantine city of Antioch in 540 (22–8); of wine-drinking (29–33); and of a vision of the 'great hall of marvels of workmanship' (*al-īwān min ʿajab al-ṣanʿa*, 34–50). The poet stresses the resilience of Khusraw's Īwān against all attempts to plunder it and refers to its carpets:

40. It was not disgraced by the robbery of carpets
    Of silk brocade or plunder of curtains of raw silk;
41. Lofty, its battlements soar,
    Raised on the summits of Raḍwā and Quds;
42. Clothed in white, so that
    You see of them but cotton robes.
43. It isn't known if it's the workmanship of men for jinn
    Who inhabit it, or the work of jinn for men,
44. Yet I see it gives witness that
    The builder is not the least of kings.

As Serrano argued, al-Buḥturī profited from the patronage of the ʿAbbāsid court but appears to have composed his *qaṣīda* in a moment of upset. Through the *aṭlāl* motif, he has made al-Madāʾin and its monuments, including the Īwān, into a subject that shows the finitude of empires generally, insinuating, perhaps, the same fate for his ʿAbbāsid patrons. He has also, as Serrano has proposed, imagined himself in the place of Khusraw Anūshirvān, served by his boon companion al-Balahbadh; his praises are for himself, not his patrons, who, we are led to believe, have failed him.[46]

46. Serrano argues that al-Buḥturī questions the 'source—and value—of imperial Arab culture' (69). This may be so, but, if anything, it won him the admiration of ʿAbbāsid poets and anthologists. The ʿAbbāsid prince and poet Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908-9) is cited by al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/946-7), who compiled the *dīwān*s of both al-Buḥturī and Ibn al-Muʿtazz, as praising the *qaṣīda*, and Ibn al-Muʿtazz's appreciative comments are repeated throughout Arabic literature, as in al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:130.

Al-Buḥturī's *qaṣīda* was widely cited after his lifetime and in many references to al-Madā'in, suggesting his poetic skill and reputation, but more importantly, the wider currency of its themes.[47] It bears witness to the fact that its builder was 'not the least of kings', and, for many who cited it, it drew attention to the success of the Arabs and Muslims in their conquests. Frequently, however, al-Buḥturī's poem is mentioned along with the anecdote about al-Manṣūr and Khālid and without reference to al-Muʿtaḍid's and al-Muktafī's plundering of the White Palace, as if to stress the wisdom of Khālid's warning, the metropolis's endurance against assault, and the failure of the ʿAbbāsids to surpass the city. In the later days of ʿAbbāsid rule, when Baghdad itself was subjected to the ravages of time, such citation surely struck a chord with audiences. These are not so much contradictory treatments as reflections of ʿAbbāsid society's ambivalence, expressing both nostalgia for an idealised past and satisfaction in its end.

In such poetic imaginings, the real al-Madā'in and its monuments fade from view. Jaroslav Stetkevych has suggested the immateriality of places in Arabic poetry and that references to places are 'indirect' and 'symbolic'; this is particularly true in post-Jāhiliyya poetry, in which 'metaphorization and symbolic saturation become fully consummated'.[48] In the case of al-Buḥturī's nostalgia and that of the Arabic reporters generally, literary form and technique align with cultural attitudes toward persistent ruins and the supercession of cities. Both are bi-focal, contemplating the present through the lost city. An archival urge is antithetical, because it would betray the sense of loss and diminishment.[49]

47. For example, see al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044), *Dīwān*, ed. Rashīd al-Ṣaffār and Muṣṭafā Jawwād (Cairo, 1958), 2:160–3. Of him, Jaroslav Stetkevych writes, 'even more than his precursor al-Buḥturī, he maintains throughout the poem the mood of loss and remembrance'. *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago, 1993), 190–1.

48. Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*, 107. For Serrano, al-Buḥturī's *qaṣīda* proves otherwise. Whereas the *aṭlāl* motif of abandoned Bedouin encampments supposes empty spaces, al-Madā'in is not an empty space but only like one—the real al-Madā'in and its ruins necessary to the poet's vision. Serrano, 'Al-Buḥturī's Poetics of Persian Abodes', 79–80, n.11.

49. Though reflecting their own forms of historical consciousness, a similar statement can be made regarding later Persian-language treatments of al-Madā'in. For a comparison of al-Buḥturī's poem with that of Khāqānī Sharvānī (d. 595/1199), see J. W. Clinton, 'The *Madāen Qasida* of Xāqāni Sharvāni', parts 1 and 2, *Edebiyāt* 1 (1976), 153–70 and 2/2 (1977), 191–206, esp. 200–1. Clinton writes that both al-Buḥturī and Khāqānī view 'the ruins as a symbol of the cruel devastation of time, and a reminder of the enduring reputation of the Sasanian's [*sic*] names and deeds. Yet [Xāqānī] can find no consolation in the survival of their memory. Xāqāni's world is that of Islam, and for him the grave is a doorway to Judgment, not oblivion'. Regarding the physicality of al-Mada'in, 'It was not the objectively describable qualities of the ruins that captured the attention of either poet, but their symbolic values'. Abbas Amanat has described a 'grievous sense of historical consciousness' (*ʿibrat*) that many Persian writers, poets, and historians of pre-modern times felt when they thought about the past. A. Amanat, 'The Study of History in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Nostalgia, Illusion, or Historical Awareness?' *Iranian Studies* 22/4 (1989), 3–18, at 3.

Conclusion

Exploration of al-Madāʾin suggests the broad attitudes of traditionists towards a Sasanian heritage and the pride they felt as its heirs, but it also suggests the anxiety that it evoked because of its symbolic associations and the way it served as a focus for rebellion against the imperial centre by pretenders, and as a home to ʿAlīds, whose loyalty was suspect. There was much forgetfulness arising from the metropolis's downfall, but it was also wished into oblivion due to ʿAbbāsid-era preoccupations. Even when it was remembered fondly, there was little burden to observe and preserve the city and its history.

Muslims lived with the material remains of past civilisations all about them that could stir political and religious loyalties among populations, especially those only recently converted to Islam. As a site inspiring pre-Islamic loyalties, Ctesiphon suggests paradigmatic ways in which attitudes to past civilisations, their histories, and material remains shaped future knowledge about them. In ʿAbbāsid Iraq and Iran, traditionists generated themes and motifs that put the present in context. In the centuries that followed, these literary elements were recycled within various interpretive frameworks that gave meaning to the past, but at an increasing distance from it. In the process, the past was written out of the shared memories of Muslims, but also written over, as new memories filled the pages of works that otherwise could have preserved more detailed knowledge of the area's past.

Legal Knowledge and Local Practices under the Early ʿAbbāsids

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Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) developed as a normative pluralism resulting in the formation and diffusion of several schools of law in the principal centres of Islam. The schools of law (*madhhab* pl. *madhāhib*)—in particular the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī, which are the main Sunnī schools that developed in the Islamic empire—reached their classical form only in the fourth/tenth century, with several features such as a common doctrine, institutionalised teaching, and authoritative leaders for each individual school.[1] This was the result of a long process that began in Iraq under the early ʿAbbāsids, between the late second/eighth and the early third/ninth century, when the eponyms of these schools lived and taught. The first ʿAbbāsid caliphs played a considerable role in the promotion of several of these schools of law, as Nurit Tsafrir has shown in respect to the spread of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.[2]

According to Joseph Schacht, the development of the classical schools of law resulted in the transformation from 'regional' into 'personal' schools of law. The ancient Iraqi school, which united around a common 'living tradition', evolved in the third/ninth century into a new school associated with the authority of Abū Ḥanīfa and his most important students, Abū Yūsuf and al-Shaybānī.[3] This shift corresponded to a globalisation of legal thought, in which law was no longer anchored within one specific province of the caliphate. This theory has been recently challenged by Nimrod Hurvitz and Wael Hallaq, who refute the reality of any 'regional' school of law. They doubt that a common doctrine existed before the establishment of the classical schools of law (which

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1. G. Makdisi, '*Ṭabaqāt*-Biography: Law and Orthodoxy in Classical Islam', *Islamic Studies* 32 (1993), 379, 390–1; C. Melchert, 'The Formation of the Sunnī Schools of Law', in W. B. Hallaq (ed.), *The Formation of Islamic Law* (Aldershot, 2004), 354–5.

2. N. Tsafrir, *The History of an Islamic School of Law. The Early Spread of Hanafism* (Cambridge MA, 2004).

3. J. Schacht, *Introduction au droit musulman* (Paris, 1983), 55. Cf. Makdisi, '*Ṭabaqāt*-Biography', 390–1; Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th–10th Centuries c.e.* (Leiden, 1997), 35.

they prefer to call 'doctrinal schools' rather than 'personal'), and they believe that no early legal doctrine had any potency beyond the small circle of students around a particular master.[4]

The latter theory, which is accurate from a purely legal point of view, does not take into account the subjective feelings of the people. I believe that the historian should pay more attention to how people who had a common way of life and a common way of thinking represented themselves when it came to legal matters. I will look specifically at what happened in certain cities in the early Islamic empire. Was there any sort of legal identity[5] evident between one place and another? To answer this question, we have to leave the above-mentioned theories and focus on the connection between the local urban elites and the government. I will seek to investigate the role that the urban elite in several Iraqi cities—and, to a lesser extent, in Fustat—played in selecting and appointing the *qāḍī*s during the early ʿAbbāsid period (132–218/750–833). I shall draw principally on the two sources for the history of the judiciary at that time: the *Akhbār al-quḍāt* of Wakīʿ (d. 306/918), a biographical dictionary of *qāḍī*s (mostly in Iraq), and the *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr* of al-Kindī (d. 350/961), which focuses on Egyptian judges. Before discussing the essential issues, it is necessary to mention briefly certain legal problems in the middle of the second/eighth century—who were the *qāḍī*s and how were they appointed?

1. Unity and Diversity: Legal Issues under the Late Umayyads and Early ʿAbbāsids

The legal situation in Iraq in the middle of the second/eighth century appears clearly in one of the rare contemporary Arabic sources, the *Risāla fī al-ṣaḥāba* by the chancellery secretary Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. c. 140/757).[6] In this famous

4. N. Hurvitz, 'Schools of Law and Historical Context: Re-examining the Formation of the Ḥanbalī Madhhab', *Islamic Law and Society* 7 (2000), 42–6; W. B. Hallaq, 'From Regional to Personal Schools of Law? A Reevaluation', *Islamic Law and Society* 8 (2001); see also S. Judd, 'Al-Awzāʿī and Sufyān al-Thawrī: The Umayyad Madhhab?', in P. Bearman, R. Peters, and F. E. Vogel (ed.), *The Islamic School of Law. Evolution, Devolution, and Progress* (Cambridge, 2005), 11, 22.

5. On the definition of 'identity', conceived in terms of boundaries between cultural models, see Philip Wood's introduction to the present volume.

6. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Risāla fī al-ṣaḥāba*, in C. Pellat, *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (mort vers 140/757) 'conseilleur' du calife* (Paris, 1976). On this epistle, see, amongst other references, J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950), 102–3; S. D. Goitein, 'A Turning Point in the History of the Muslim State (Apropos of the Kitāb al-ṣaḥāba of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ)', in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, 1968); A. K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam. An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* (New York, 1981), 51; J. E. Lowry, 'The First Islamic Legal Theory: Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ on Interpretation, Authority, and the Structure of the Law', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128 (2008), 25–40.

epistle, the author warns the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–58/754–75) about the legal diversity that is dividing the Islamic realm, including the province of Iraq itself. He cites as examples the cities of Ḥīra and Kufa, which, although situated near each other, applied different rules for similar crimes or offences. In fact, contradictory judgments could even be given in different parts of the same city.[7]

The contradictions emphasised by Ibn al-Muqaffāʿ are a reflection of a wider phenomenon on which Schacht based his theory of the ancient schools of law. In the middle of the second/eighth century, three principal regional schools of law divided the Islamic Middle East: there was an Iraqi school, based on the jurists of Kufa and Basra; a Ḥijāzī school, based on the jurists of Medina and Mecca; and a Syrian school.[8] These three schools represented divergent legal movements and proposed different solutions for the same problem. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Risāla fī al-ṣaḥāba* also shows that there were divisions within these regional schools. As Hallaq and Hurvitz suggested, it is probable that each circle of jurists had its own doctrines (as, for example, in Kufa, which was divided into several distinct schools of thought associated with particular parts of the city); nevertheless, it is also probable that, at a certain level, the people were aware of some kind of local 'super-schools', each one corresponding to a specific city. It is enough, for the time being, to emphasise the considerable legal diversity at that time, whether in Iraq or in Arabia (Medinese legal thought probably differed slightly from the Meccan).[9]

After the revolution that toppled the Umayyads in 132/750, the ʿAbbāsid caliphs had to deal with this legal diversity. To overthrow the previous dynasty, the ʿAbbāsids had relied on a broad political movement of Shīʿī inspiration that supported the family of the Prophet. Once in power, the elected member of the family (*al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad*) was supposed to restore justice and apply divine law.[10] It is probable that some sort of legal reform was expected from the new dynasty and that Ibn al-Muqaffāʿ's epistle reflected these popular expectations. The multiplicity of rules for just one crime (even major ones such as murder or illegal sexual intercourse) suggested that some of them, at least, did not comply with divine law. The unification of the law could therefore be seen as a major way to restore justice. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ proposed to al-Manṣūr a

7. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Risāla fī al-ṣaḥāba*, 40–2.

8. Schacht, *Origins*, 21–35.

9. On the Meccan legal trend, see H. Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools* (Leiden, 2002).

10. See M. Sharon, *Black Banners from the East*. Vol. 1, *The Establishment of the ʿAbbāsid State: Incubation of a Revolt* (Leiden, 1983), 147; M. Sharon, *Black Banners from the East*. Vol. 2, *Revolt. The Social and Military Aspects of The ʿAbbāsid Revolution* (Jerusalem, 1990), 250f.; P. Crone, 'On the Meaning of the ʿAbbasid Call to *al-Riḍā*', in C. E. Bosworth et al. (eds.), *The Islamic World From Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton, 1989), esp. 100–1.

remedy for this legal diversity: the codification of Islamic law. The caliph would promulgate a unique legal code and would impose it on all the *qāḍī*s of the empire. This code would be updated by each subsequent caliph.[11] According to later Muslim sources, al-Manṣūr asked the Medinese jurist Mālik ibn Anas (the eponym of the Mālikī school, d. 179/795) to write such a code, but Mālik refused.[12] Benjamin Jokisch argues that codification was eventually enforced under Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 70–193/786–809).[13] I will come back to this later. All in all, it seems that a legal unification was difficult to enforce, because the elaboration of law was already regarded, in the main cities of the empire, as the prerogative of private scholars.

2. The Judiciary in the Middle of the Second/Eighth Century

2.1. A local institution

During the late Umayyad and the early ʿAbbāsid periods, a single *qāḍī* was appointed in every large city, whose duties were both legal and administrative. From the early Umayyad period, if not earlier, his main task was to dispense justice between litigants who had filed complaints before him, most often in the city's great mosque.[14] From the early ʿAbbāsids onwards, the *qāḍī* became a major administrator of the city and was sometimes expected to intervene in private business, when people could no longer manage their own affairs. In Egypt, as Sobhi Bouderbala has shown, the tribal administrators known as *ʿarīf*s managed the property of orphans under the Umayyads, but this authority was transferred to the *qāḍī* under al-Manṣūr.[15] At the same time, the *qāḍī* of Basra began to manage the pious foundations (*waqf*s), the orphans' properties, and the inheritance of people dying without an heir (*ḥashriyyāt*).[16] These administrative tasks were subsequently upheld by legal theory.[17]

The origins of the rules applied by the *qāḍī*s are still little known. Judges apparently relied on the Qurʾan and on normative practices (*sunan*) of exemplary

11. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Risāla fī al-ṣaḥāba*, 42–3. See also Lambton, *State and Government*, 53; P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph. Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986), 86; Lowry, 'The First Islamic Legal Theory', 36.

12. Y. Dutton, *The Origins of Islamic Law. The Qur'an, the Muwaṭṭa' and Madinan ʿAmal* (London, 1999), 29. On Mālik, see J. Schacht, 'Mālik b. Anas', *EI2*.

13. B. Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law. Harun-Al-Rashid's Codification Project* (Berlin, 2007), esp. 261–309.

14. M. Tillier, 'Un espace judiciaire entre public et privé: Audiences de cadis à l'époque ʿabbāside', *Annales Islamologiques* 38 (2004), 497f.

15. S. Bouderbala, *Ǧund Miṣr: Étude de l'administration militaire d'Égypte des débuts de l'Islam, 21/642–218/833* (PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2008), 267.

16. Wakiʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:58, 70.

17. E. Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire en pays d'Islam* (Leiden, 1960), 363, 369, 375f.

men (including caliphs), and they contributed importantly to the drawing up of legal norms by the use of their personal opinion or *raʾy*.[18] There was no definitive or binding written legal corpus yet. As far as we can trace them, the first 'fixed' compendia of jurisprudence emerged in the late second/eighth and the early third/ninth century, with the formation of the proto-Ḥanafī and proto-Mālikī *madhhab*s.[19] Despite their adherence to legal trends, *qāḍī*s could still choose the most appropriate legal solution to a specific issue,[20] and it was not until the late third/ninth or the early fourth/tenth century, with the formation of formal schools of law, that *qāḍī*s had to comply with the legal rules promoted by their own *madhhab*. The *qāḍī*s did not enjoy total freedom, because their rulings could be controlled by the government, which could easily dismiss them from their position.[21] Nevertheless, they could, in many cases, apply their personal understanding of legal and social order, and they played a leading part in the shaping of an 'Islamic' society. Two *qāḍī*s from the middle of the second/eighth century exemplify this ambiguous role: the famous jurist Ibn Abī Laylā (d. in office, in 148/765), who served as a judge in Kufa at the end of the Umayyad period and under the first ʿAbbāsid caliphs,[22] is well known for his contribution to the formulation of judiciary procedures based on his opinions and experience.[23] In Basra, the *qāḍī* ʿUbayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-ʿAnbarī (d. 168/785) contributed to the definition of the fiscal status of the regions near his city and refused to act on the legal and fiscal instructions of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–85).[24]

Judgeship was a key institution for the people of a city. The resolution of many problems depended on the *qāḍī*—on his legal opinion and on his judgements. From the middle of the second/eighth century onwards, state administrators and scholars began to work out theories about the 'good' *qāḍī*—his qualities and his knowledge. Later reflections, within the classical schools of law, unsurprisingly attached importance to the judge's legal knowledge. In the second/eighth century, however, thinkers such as the chancellery secretary (*kātib*) ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Yaḥyā (d. 132/750) or the *qāḍī* ʿUbayd Allāh ibn

18. Schacht, *Origins*, 100; W. B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge, 2005), 44f.

19. See al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, 1:87; on the development of early Mālikī texts, see J. E. Brockopp, *Early Mālikī Law. Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam and his Major Compendium of Jurisprudence* (Leiden, 2000), 66, 73, 89, 111.

20. In the early third/ninth century, the *qāḍī* Ibrāhīm ibn al-Jarrāḥ usually chose for each case among the legal views of Abū Ḥanīfa, Abū Yūsuf, Mālik ibn Anas, and Ibn Abī Laylā. Al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, ed. R. Guest, *Kitāb al-wulāt wa-kitāb al-quḍāt* (Leiden, 1912), 432.

21. M. Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq et l'État abbasside (132/750–334/945)* (Damascus, 2009), 240f., 578f.

22. J. Schacht, 'Ibn Abī Laylā', *EI2*; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 99.

23. See, e.g., Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 3:133–4.

24. M. Tillier, 'Un traité politique du II^{e}/VIII^{e} siècle: L'épître de ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿAnbarī au calife al-Mahdī', *Annales Islamologiques* 40 (2006), 142–4.

al-Ḥasan al-ʿAnbarī focused mainly on the social knowledge and experience of the judge: even though a legal background was required, such knowledge could be provided by counsellors whose advice the judge was supposed to seek. A lack of social knowledge, however, could not be counterbalanced: the *qāḍī* had to understand the urban society in which he was appointed, and figure out the complex familial and tribal relationships, such as, for example, in sharing out an inheritance between the legal beneficiaries.[25]

Despite many common features, the inhabitants of every large city developed their own original characteristics following the Islamic conquests. Although Basra and Kufa were founded at the same time and in the same region, different tribes had settled there, and they had developed their own urban models. The Yamanī tribes of Kufa, for example, maintained their ancient tradition of gathering in cemeteries, which resulted in urban structures unknown in Basra.[26] Each city had its own needs, and at the end of the Umayyad period, the judiciary was still seen as a local institution. This was possible largely because of the decentralised organisation of the state.

Until the reign of al-Manṣūr, the second ʿAbbāsid caliph, the *qāḍī*s were usually appointed by the governors of the cities or provinces. The caliph rarely intervened in their appointments. The *qāḍī* appeared as a kind of 'legal secretary' of the governor, who was considered to be the actual holder of the judgeship, who delegated his judicial powers to the *qāḍī*.[27] The turnover of the governors was high, however, and most of them were sent by the caliphate from outside the province or the city.[28] Therefore, the governor often relied on the advice of the local elite when appointing a *qāḍī*. If a *qāḍī* died or was dismissed, he consulted the notables to learn whom they wanted as a replacement. This system was still apparent in the early ʿAbbāsid period, under al-Saffāḥ and at the beginning of the reign of al-Manṣūr.[29]

Not only were the notables involved in the selection of the *qāḍī*, but the *qāḍī* was also generally chosen from amongst the local elite itself. In Umayyad Iraq, the judges were local scholars supported by notables. In Fustat, all *qāḍī*s belonged to the leading Yamanī clans of the city, such as Ḥaḍramawṭ, Khawlān, and Sakūn.[30] The judiciary was regarded as a local institution employing local

25. Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 187–94.

26. H. Djaït, *al-Kûfa. Naissance de la ville islamique* (Paris, 1986), 287f.

27. Schacht, *Introduction*, 32.

28. J. Lassner, *The Shaping of ʿAbbâsid Rule* (Princeton, 1980), 58. For the governors of Fustat, see H. Kennedy, 'Central Government and Provincial Elites in the Early ʿAbbāsid Califate', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44 (1981), 26–38.

29. Tsafrir, *The History*, 30; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 146–7.

30. Kennedy, 'Central Government and Provincial Elites', 37; M. Tillier, *Histoire des cadis égyptiens*, forthcoming. On the *qāḍī*s of al-Mawṣil under the early ʿAbbāsid caliphate, see Kennedy, 'Central Government', 30.

inhabitants, and this local framework may well have contributed to a local or regional development of Islamic law.

2.2. ʿAbbāsid centralisation

Almost two decades after the ʿAbbāsid revolution, the caliph initiated one of the most significant reforms of the dynasty, namely, the centralisation of the state and judiciary. Al-Manṣūr and his successors decided that virtually all the judges in the empire should be appointed by the central government (the caliph, sometimes his chief judge, and later his vizier).[31] The first appointment by al-Manṣūr took place in Basra in 140/757,[32] and twenty years later all the *qāḍī*s of the central provinces of the empire (including Fustat, Damascus and Medina) were appointed by the caliphate.[33] The *qāḍī* was now dispensing justice in the name of the caliph. If we remember that the ʿAbbāsid revolution intended to restore justice on earth, after the allegedly illegitimate Umayyad dynasty, and that the first ʿAbbāsid caliphs claimed to be rightly guided rulers and deputies of God,[34] we realise that this reform was symbolically significant. Moreover, it helped the caliphs increase their power by restricting that of the provincial governors. The latter were no longer responsible for carrying out justice and were therefore significantly weakened. They had lost the privileged relationship they had had with local scholars and had to deal with *qāḍī*s who were now their equals—both now being appointed directly by the caliph—and whose administrative responsibilities in each city were increasing.

The centralisation of the judiciary can also be interpreted as an attempt to unify legal practices and to reduce the heterogeneity denounced by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. If the caliphs could hardly codify Islamic law, which was already in the hands of private scholars, the centralisation allowed them to select the *qāḍī*s and to support one particular legal trend or another. As Nurit Tsafrir has shown,[35] this was probably one of the main reasons for the centralisation and ʿAbbāsid legal policy is evident in the appointments of the *qāḍī*s in the capital, al-Hāshimiyya and later Baghdad.

During the 25 years that followed the ʿAbbāsid revolution, the caliphs favoured mainly the Medinese school of law: they chose their *qāḍī*s from amongst the scholars of Medina and persuaded them to come to Iraq.[36] Why

31. Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 101–1.
32. Wakiʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:57.
33. B. Johansen, 'Wahrheit und Geltungsanspruch: Zur Begründung und Begrenzung der Autorität des Qadi-Urteils im islamischen Recht', in O. Capitani et al., *La Giustizia nell' alto medioevo (secoli IX–XI)* (Spoleto, 1997), 994; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 104.
34. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 80–2.
35. Tsafrir, *The History*, 40f.
36. Tsafrir, *The History*, 40; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 148f.

did they choose to rely on this legal trend? The sources are unfortunately silent about their motivation, but the following hypothesis can be made. The first ʿAbbāsid caliphs (al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr) came from Syria, while their armies came from Khurāsān (an eastern province of Iran). When the new dynasty settled in Iraq, the political elite was not accustomed to Iraqi legal thought (founded on the practices and the traditions of the Companions and Successors who had settled in the main cities of southern Iraq),[37] nor did they know the leading local scholars. According to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, Iraqi scholars had suffered from a poor reputation under the Umayyads, and the new power may have been hesitant to integrate them fully into their administration.[38] Moreover, many Iraqi scholars (especially the traditionists) were pro-ʿAlid and regarded the ʿAbbāsids as usurpers. The first ʿAbbāsid caliphs may therefore have been reluctant to employ them.[39] They could not rely on Syrian jurists such as al-Awzāʿī[40] without giving the impression that they were following Umayyad practices, thereby losing the support of the Khurāsānī army. They therefore had to find a legal tradition that would seem to comply with divine will. For many people, Medina probably appeared as the preserve of the *sunna* (tradition) inherited directly from the Prophet. The scholars of this city saw themselves as the heirs of the true practice (*ʿamal*) of the Prophet, unbroken in Medina since the time he preached there.[41] The caliphs may have hoped that these Medinese scholars would confer a wider legitimacy on the new dynasty, which would appear to be working for the restoration of the *sunna* of the Prophet.

From the reign of al-Mahdī (the third ʿAbbāsid caliph, r. 158–69/775–85) onwards, the *qāḍī*s of Baghdad were drawn mainly from amongst Iraqi scholars, especially from the followers of the Kufan jurist Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767),[42] as was the case with Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), the first *qāḍī* to be given the title of 'chief *qāḍī*' (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*). According to Nurit Tsafrir, the main reason for this change of legal policy was theological. Like Abū Ḥanīfa, most of his students were apparently Murjiʾīs who believed that the status of a sinner was postponed until the Day of Resurrection. Therefore, they refused to question the ruler and were considered to be particularly loyal to the ʿAbbāsid dynasty.[43]

37. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution*, 106–7. Cf. Schacht, *Origins*, 231.

38. The reason of this bad reputation is unclear. One would expect that Iraqi scholars had a bad reputation in Syria because of their opposition to the Umayyads. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's text suggests, however, that these scholars had suffered from a bad reputation in Iraq itself because of their collaboration with unjust rulers. In his *Risāla*, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ encourages the caliph to rely more on Iraqi people. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Risāla fī al-ṣaḥāba*, 39.

39. See Tsafrir, *The History*, 24–6; M. Q. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden, 1997), 78–9.

40. See Judd, 'al-Awzāʿī and Sufyān al-Ṯhawrī', 22.

41. Schacht, *Origins*, 61; Dutton, *The Origins of Islamic Law*, 31f.

42. Tsafrir, *The History*, 40–1; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 151f.

43. Tsafrir, *The History*, 25–7.

This interpretation does not, however, take into consideration the fact that early Murjiʾism was a more revolutionary movement than it became in the third/ninth century,[44] and that Abū Ḥanīfa's attitude toward the ʿAbbāsids was ambiguous.[45] Other reasons—probably legal—might explain the ʿAbbāsids' support of proto-Ḥanafīs, and this issue needs further research that is beyond the scope of this chapter. Be that as it may, the ʿAbbāsids quickly extended their policy beyond Baghdad by the means of centralisation and appointed members of Abū Ḥanīfa's circle as *qāḍī*s in other cities of Iraq and the Middle East, thus promoting what would eventually become the Ḥanafī school of law.[46]

3. The Resistance of Local Elites to ʿAbbāsid Centralisation

3.1. An ʿAbbāsid absolutism?

In spite of the centralisation ordered by the ʿAbbāsid caliphs, the judiciary did not immediately lose its local characteristics, nor did urban elites forget their interest in the appointment of *qāḍī*s. This can be seen clearly in the city of Basra, where a new judge was appointed in 156/773. Wakīʿ relates the following story:

> ʿUbayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-Muʾaddib reported from al-Numayrī, from ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Ghiyāth, from Jannāb al-Khashkhāsh, from Sallām ibn Abī Khayra:
>
> After Sawwār's death,[47] we talked about him at ʿUbayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan's,[48] who implored God in his favour and praised him. We asked ʿUbayd Allāh:
>
> 'Who do you think would be suitable for the judgeship after him?'
>
> 'That is obvious', he replied. 'Abū Bakr ibn al-Faḍl al-ʿAtakī'.
>
> Then we visited Abū Bakr and talked about Sawwār. He implored God in his favour and we asked him:
>
> 'Who do you think would be suitable for the judgeship after him?'

44. See W. Madelung, 'The Early Murjiʾa in Khurāsān and Transoxania and the Spread of Ḥanafism', *Der Islam* 59 (1982), 32–9.

45. He was suspected of supporting the Shīʿī rebel Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762, and he was supposedly imprisoned after he refused to be appointed as a *qāḍī* by al-Manṣūr. See Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 73; J. Schacht, 'Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān', *EI2*.

46. Tsafrir, *The History*, passim.

47. Sawwār ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 156/773), *qāḍī* of Basra from 140/757-8 until his death. See Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:57f.; Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-maʿārif*, 590; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 3:257.

48. On this scholar, see p.191.

'Is there any doubt about that?' he replied. 'It can only be one man: ʿUbayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan'.

Sallām ibn Abī Khayra said:

We were surprised by their common agreement on the matter.

Even though this narrative is told to highlight the importance of these two scholars (ʿUbayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-ʿAnbarī and Abū Bakr ibn al-Faḍl al-ʿAtakī) and their modesty, it may also show how discussions took place in the selection of new *qāḍī*s. In this story, the scholars do not suggest the candidate most likely to be selected by the caliph, but rather express their opinion on who deserved to become a *qāḍī*.

How did they dare speak out about this matter, when judges were now appointed by the central authority according to a wide political programme that promoted the standardisation of legal practice? Some scholars believe that this programme was the result of an autocratic system, in which the arbitrary power of the caliph was absolute.[49] But centralisation did not mean despotism, as Nurit Tsafrir has clearly shown.[50] The legitimacy of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty was not well enough established to allow the caliphs to impose their legal and judicial policy by force. They could easily experiment with a new legal policy in Baghdad because it was a new city, built almost ex nihilo and without any local legal tradition.[51] But the situation was totally different in other Iraqi cities: the so-called ʿAbbāsid 'revolution' was regarded by many people as an usurpation of power, either at the expense of the Umayyads (according to the majority of Syrians)[52] or of the ʿAlid family. The crystallisation of the Shīʿī opposition around ʿAlid leaders such as the Ḥasanid Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 145/763), who revolted in Basra under al-Manṣūr,[53] jeopardised the caliphate in Iraq. The ʿAbbāsids could not afford to impose any legal reform against the wishes of the local elites, lest opposition to their dynasty be strengthened.

3.2. Dealing with local issues

The centralisation of the judiciary was a long process, and the method of selecting the *qāḍī*s did not change immediately. The first ʿAbbāsid caliphs still consulted local people before appointing a judge and summoned to Baghdad delegations (*wafd*, pl. *wufūd*) made up of notables. The sources give several examples of delegations coming from Basra to meet the caliphs al-Mahdī and

49. See, e.g., Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law*, 251, 264, 274, 280.
50. Tsafrir, *The History*, 36.
51. Tsafrir, *The History*, 40; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 148.
52. See P. M. Cobb, *White Banners. Contention in ʿAbbasid Syria, 750–880* (Albany, 2001), 43f.
53. See H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate. A Political History* (London and Sydney, 1981), 67–70; L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd Allāh', *EI2*.

al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809). These delegations usually consisted of five or six notables and scholars from the city, representing different legal and theological trends.[54] The caliph received them and asked whom they wanted as *qāḍī*. In 167/783–4, the governor of Basra, Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, chose a delegation of six local notables and sent them to the caliph al-Mahdī. The governor wanted them to insist that the caliph dismiss Khālid ibn Ṭalīq, a *qāḍī* who was apparently hated by many Basrans. Although the delegation was used as a tool by the governor to obtain the dismissal of Khālid ibn Ṭalīq, each member felt free to propose his own candidate to replace the dismissed judge, and it seems that the local elite could make themselves heard. Moreover, according to the list reported by Wakīʿ, the members of this delegation were representatives of rival groups in Basra, such as partisans of *raʾy*, partisans of *ḥadīth*, proto-Ḥanafīs, members of the Basran legal trend, and Muʿtazilīs.[55] Although the delegation consisted of only six men, they represented a large section of the Basran elite. Such consultations of the local elite did not mean that the ʿAbbāsids renounced their programme of legal unification in favour of the proto-Ḥanafī trend, but it did mean that the enforcement of this programme was limited by local wishes.[56]

The consultation of the provincial elite had perhaps a symbolic meaning: the caliph had to show that he was not a tyrant. As a deputy of God, however, he could claim to have a better understanding of legal issues and to have the right to appoint whomever he wanted as *qāḍī*. The issue was therefore not merely symbolic. The caliph was ready to take the delegations' opinion into consideration, which means that the local wishes were seen as important. The city's notables insisted particularly on having a 'local' *qāḍī*. Émile Tyan has interpreted this request as a matter of 'national pride'.[57] Evidence shows that the reality was more complex. It seems that an ability to understand local practices was a key criterion in the selection of *qāḍī*s, a criterion that could be verified only by people who were familiar with local practices.

Two examples from Iraq can be cited to illustrate this hypothesis. Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Anṣārī (d. 143/760?), a Ḥijāzī jurist who had been a judge in Medina under the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd II (r. 125–6/743–4),[58] was appointed *qāḍī* of al-Hāshimiyya by al-Saffāḥ or al-Manṣūr.[59] Just before leaving Medina for Iraq, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd prided himself on 'knowing everything' in the presence of Sulaymān ibn Bilāl al-Qurashī (d. c. 172/788–9), a Medinese scholar who had

54. Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 167.
55. Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:128.
56. For consultations of local elites in Egypt, see al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, 369, 370.
57. Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire*, 171.
58. Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 3:241. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh* (Beirut, 1982), 5:274.
59. Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 3:243; al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Madīnat al-Salām* (Beirut, 2001), 16:156.

been in charge of land tax in his city.[60] Later, however, Sulaymān ibn Bilāl received a letter in which Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd complained that he could not understand some of the litigations brought before him in court and that, in such cases, he did not know which judgement to pass. He requested the secret assistance of another Medinese jurist, Rabīʿa al-Raʾy (d. 136/753).[61] Although Wakīʿ is silent about the nature of these problematic cases, we can suppose that Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd's Medinese legal training was inapplicable to many aspects of Iraqi society.

The second example is from about 145/762, when the Egyptian jurist and *qāḍī* Ghawth ibn Sulaymān (d. 168/785) went to Iraq and was asked by the caliph al-Manṣūr to arbitrate on a matrimonial conflict between him and his wife, Umm Mūsā. Subsequently, the caliph proposed to appoint him *qāḍī* of Kufa. Ghawth ibn Sulaymān protested that he was not from that city (*balad*) and that he knew nothing about its inhabitants. According to al-Kindī, Ghawth was appointed *qāḍī* of Kufa, but after a while people stopped attending his court, and he was dismissed.[62] According to Ibn ʿAsākir, however, al-Manṣūr accepted his excuse of not being familiar with the city and never appointed him to Kufa; this is probably closer to the truth, because Ghawth ibn Sulaymān does not appear in Wakīʿ's list of Kufan judges.[63] The first ʿAbbāsid caliphs supported, to a certain extent, the ancient Egyptian school of law, and several leading Egyptian scholars were attracted to Baghdad.[64] However, even though al-Manṣūr appealed to an Egyptian jurist to arbitrate his personal litigations, he could hardly appoint such a 'stranger' as a *qāḍī* to a major Iraqi city. If he actually did, as al-Kindī maintains, the appointment failed, because the Kufans would not accept a judge who could not understand the particularities of their society.

3.3. A question of legal doctrine: central authority versus local interests

In several instances, the delegations sent to the caliph opposed the promotion of proto-Ḥanafī *qāḍī*s, not only because they were 'strangers' unable to understand local cases, but also because of their legal doctrine. The notables were attached to their local traditions and were not ready to accept a *qāḍī* belonging to a different legal trend. Some feared that such a judge would seriously disrupt

60. On this scholar, see Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut, 1968), 5:420; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* (Beirut, 1980), 11:372–5; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (Beirut, 1981–1988), 7:425–7.

61. Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 3:242; al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, 16:158. See also al-Nubāhī, *Taʾrīkh quḍāt al-Andalus* (Beirut, 1983), 10. On Rabīʿa al-Raʾy, see al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* (Beirut, 1997), 3:17; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* (Beirut, 1994), 2:288.

62. Al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, 376.

63. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq* (Beirut, 1995), 48:101.

64. See Tillier, 'Les 'premiers' cadis de Fusṭāṭ'.

the urban order and harm the people's material interests. When the caliph al-Mahdī consulted the delegation of Basrans in 167/783–4, one of them suggested the appointment of a local scholar, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 215/830),[65] and praised him for his qualities, but another member of the delegation contradicted him, saying:

> 'He spoke truly, and indeed he has all these qualities. However, this advice is not wise, because this man follows Abū Ḥanīfa and inclines towards his opinions (*raʾyu-hu*). Yet, we have in our city rules (*aḥkām*) that Abū Ḥanīfa considers invalid, but which are the only ones suitable for us. If he judged our litigations on the ground of rules other than our own, our rules would become void, and our goods would be lost'—he seemed to be alluding to the pious foundations.[66]

It was eventually another scholar, faithful to the Basran legal tradition, who was appointed by the caliph. This story shows that at the end of the eighth century, the representatives of the Basran people regarded the doctrine of the Kufan Abū Ḥanīfa as a foreign one.[67] Despite divergences between local circles of jurists, they were all more or less united around a local common practice, especially regarding the administration of pious foundations. Abū Ḥanīfa contested the validity of permanent pious foundations established for relatives (*waqf ahlī*), which could be used to evade Islamic law on inheritance. According to him, a *waqf* was valid only if the founder established it as from the moment of his death;[68] moreover, only the descendants of the founder who had already been procreated by the time the founder died were entitled to a share in the revenues of the foundation. When these descendants died, their shares had to be transferred to indigent people, so that no more than two or three generations could benefit from the revenue of a pious foundation.[69] If such family foundations were a traditional practice in Basra, the prosperity and wealth of many Basrans would have been threatened by a proto-Ḥanafī *qāḍī*.[70]

The elite of Fustat also rejected a proto-Ḥanafī *qāḍī* coming from Iraq, Ismāʿīl ibn Alīsaʿ (164–7/781–4). He wanted to apply the same rule in Egypt and

65. On this proto-Ḥanafī scholar, who became *qāḍī* in Basra in 191–2/806–7 and from 198/813 until 202/817-8, see Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:151, 157; al-Ṣaymarī, *Akhbār Abī Ḥanīfa* (Beirut, 1985), 164; al-Khaṭīb, *Taʾrīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, 3:405–10; Ibn Abī l-Wafāʾ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Cairo, 1993), 3:99–203.

66. Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:131. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Beirut, 1984), 7:424.

67. See Tsafrir, *The History*, 34; see also Melchert, 'The Formation of the Sunnī Schools', 363.

68. R. Peters, 'Waḳf', *EI2*.

69. Al-Khaṣṣāf, *Aḥkām al-awqāf* (Beirut, 1999), 94.

70. Tsafrir, *The History*, 34. On Abū Ḥanīfa's opposition to *waqf*s, see also P. Hennigan, *The Birth of a Legal Institution: The Formation of the Waqf in Third-Century A.H. Ḥanafī Legal Discourse* (Leiden, 2004), xix.

was accused of trying to abrogate the pious foundations.[71] In addition, the people of Fustat reproached him for tolerating the insult *yā ma'būn, yā lūṭī* (an accusation of passive homosexuality), which he did not consider punishable by the prescribed sanction (*ḥadd*) for false accusation of fornication (*qadhf*).[72] Once more, he followed the teaching of Abū Ḥanīfa, who did not regard such an insult as a crime as long as it was vague enough, whereas Mālik ibn Anas assimilated it to *qadhf* and ordered the culprit to be punished harshly.[73] Like their principal jurist, al-Layth ibn Sa'd (d. 175/791), the inhabitants of Fustat were strongly opposed to homosexual behaviour and thus to false accusations of homosexual behaviour.[74] The Ḥanafī doctrine might have been seen to jeopardise public morality in Fustat.

In Egypt, as in the Iraqi *amṣār* (military settlements), the Ḥanafī doctrine promoted by the central government was not easily accepted. Until the reign of al-Rashīd, at the end of the second/eighth century, the Basran people prevented the caliph from appointing any *qāḍī* from amongst the followers of Abū Ḥanīfa and demanded that scholars be recruited from within the local legal tradition.[75] Even in Kufa, where the students of Abū Ḥanīfa were only one of the prominent circles of jurists, the government could not appoint scholars who can be safely identified as proto-Ḥanafīs until the reign of al-Amīn (r. 193–8/809–13). The judiciary remained in the hands of the followers of Ibn Abī Laylā, Abū Ḥanīfa's main rival.[76]

The wishes of notables were thus the principal obstacle to the 'Abbāsid policy. Several times, the caliph appointed a *qāḍī* in Basra against the wishes of the inhabitants, but usually such a *qāḍī* stayed in office for no more than one or two years, whereas *qāḍī*s appointed in accordance with the wishes of the people stayed in office for an average of five or six years.[77] The most striking example is that of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Makhzūmī, a Ḥanafī *qāḍī* appointed in Basra in 172/788–9 against the wishes of the people: he was dismissed just four months later.[78] Wakī' explains that he could not resolve the litigations brought before him and that he hesitated before issuing a judgment diverging from local legal traditions:

71. Al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, 372–3. Cf. Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Nuzhat al-nuẓẓār*, 116–7; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* (Cairo: 1913–22), 1:418. On this *qāḍī*, see Tyan, *Histoire de l'organisation judiciaire*, 156.

72. Al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, 371–2.

73. On the Ḥanafī position, see al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'* (Islamabad, 1971), 169; al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ* (Beirut, 1406/1986), 9:102. On the Mālikī position, see Saḥnūn, *al-Mudawwana l-kubrā* (Beirut, n.d.), 6:214; Ibn Farḥūn, *Tabṣirat al-ḥukkām* (Beirut, 1995), 2:201–2.

74. Al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'*, 158.

75. Tsafrir, *The History*, 36; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 179.

76. Tsafrir, *The History*, 24; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 176–7.

77. Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 180.

78. Wakī', *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:140. See Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 178.

Al-Aḥwaṣ ibn al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Ghassān reported from Ḥafṣ ibn ʿUthmān:

> We saw a woman who had submitted a case before ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Makhzūmī, the *qāḍī* of Basra. When she became impatient to hear his judgment, he stood before her and said: 'I have difficulties with your case, even though I know what is right and not wrong according to my [own doctrine]. Be patient. If you want me to talk to the governor, so that he convenes the jurists of Basra for you, I can do that. And if you want, I shall write to the Commander of the Faithful and ask the jurists of the Muslims who sit next to him'.[79]

The *qāḍī* could not issue a judgement in conformity with local practices, perhaps because he did not understand these practices—or because he simply would not depart from his beliefs. On the other hand, he could not impose his own doctrine and bring upon himself the litigants' wrath. He therefore left the decision to the assembly of local scholars or to the jurists of the caliph's court (presumably Ḥanafīs like himself).

3.4. Towards a marginalisation of ancient provincial elites

The centralisation of the judiciary had long-term consequences for the provincial elite. Despite the role that the first ʿAbbāsid caliphs still accorded to local notables in the selection of *qāḍī*s, the reform initiated by al-Manṣūr can also be interpreted as an attempt to undermine their power. This attempt was eventually successful, as shown by the history of Egyptian *qāḍī*s.

The first *qāḍī* appointed by al-Manṣūr in Fustat, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Lahīʿa (d. 174/790), was still a representative of the old class of Egyptian notables (*wujūh*) who controlled the key institutions in Fustat, such as the position of *ṣāḥib al-shurṭa* (chief of the police).[80] A few years later, however, the caliph al-Mahdī appointed, for the first time in the history of Egypt, a *qāḍī* who did not belong to the local elite, but came from Iraq (Ismāʿīl ibn Alīsaʿ, who was also a follower of Abū Ḥanīfa).[81] He was so unpopular that the caliph had no choice but to dismiss him and replace him with an Egyptian scholar (Ghawth ibn Sulaymān, and then al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Faḍāla). In 170/786, the caliph al-Hādī (r. 169–70/785–6) appointed a new 'outsider' in Fustat, the Medinese ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥazmī, followed a few years later by the Iraqi Muḥammad ibn Masrūq. At first, the caliphs sent *qāḍī*s from Yamanī tribes, because they probably believed that they would be more accepted in a predominantly Yamanī

79. Wakīʿ, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, 2:142.
80. Kennedy, 'Central Government', 34–5.
81. See p.199–200.

environment.[82] Hārūn al-Rashīd soon abandoned this precaution and appointed Qaysī *qāḍī*s such as al-ʿUmarī and al-Bakrī.

The centralisation of the Egyptian judiciary has been interpreted as part of a wider programme of legal unification under the (proto-)Ḥanafī trend.[83] Not all the *qāḍī*s sent from Iraq were Ḥanafīs, however. Al-Ḥazmī belonged to the Medinese/proto-Mālikī school, as did al-ʿUmarī and, later, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Zuhrī (217–26/832–40).[84] In Egypt, at least, the centralisation of the judiciary meant first and foremost a reinforcement of caliphal authority. The caliphs tried, as far as possible, to send *qāḍī*s belonging to the *madhhab* that they personally supported, which was not always the Ḥanafī school. Al-Rashīd probably sent al-ʿUmarī to Fustat when he turned to the Mālikīs, after the death of Abū Yūsuf, and appointed the Medinese Abū al-Bakhtarī as chief *qāḍī*.[85]

The fourth *fitna* (the war between al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn and its aftermath) temporarily defeated the efforts of the caliphate to enhance its authority. Between 197/813 and 211/826, Egypt became virtually autonomous.[86] The *wujūh* were able to regain control of Fustat, and *qāḍī*s were appointed from within the old established families who had long monopolised the institution, but this reversal of affairs was short lived. In 211/826, the governor ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ṭāhir re-established ʿAbbāsid authority in Egypt, and the traditional Yamanī *wujūh* disappeared from the political scene forever.[87] A new ruling elite came to power. Most of the *qāḍī*s were now outsiders and belonged to Qaysī tribes. Even though Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Layth (226–35/841–50) had lived in Fustat for twenty years when he was appointed *qāḍī*,[88] he was a Ḥanafī from a Qaysī tribe and, as the principal participant of the *miḥna* in Fustat in the 840s,[89] he represented—more than anyone—the coercive power of the central government.[90]

In Iraq, the influence of the local elites was still evident at the beginning of the third/ninth century. The number of Ḥanafī *qāḍī*s increased in Basra and Kufa during following decades. This does not mean that a central power was imposed on a reluctant people. The proto-Ḥanafī school had supposedly gained

82. Tsafrir, *The History*, 96.

83. Tsafrir, *The History*, 27.

84. See the list of the Egyptian *qāḍī*s in M. Tillier, *Histoire des cadis égyptiens*.

85. Al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, 392. On Abū al-Bakhtarī, see Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 154 and index.

86. G. Wiet, *L'Égypte arabe de la conquête arabe à la conquête ottomane* (Paris, 1937), 71.

87. Kennedy, 'Egypt as a Province of the Islamic Caliphate', in C. F. Petry, *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge, 1998), 82.

88. Al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, 449.

89. Al-Kindī, *Akhbār quḍāt Miṣr*, 447, 451f. On this *qāḍī*, see also M. Hinds, 'Miḥna', *EI2*.

90. See Tillier, *Histoire des cadis égyptiens*.

ground in these two cities, and the caliphate could more easily appoint *qāḍī*s belonging to this school of law.[91] Nevertheless, the influence of the local elite soon declined. As was the case in Egypt, the provincial elite of Kufa and Basra no longer played a part in the selection of their *qāḍī*s, and we do not hear about any delegation after the return of al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–33) to Baghdad in 204/819. Individual scholars were consulted before the appointment of a *qāḍī* under al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–47/847–61), but they were no longer representatives of the local peoples.[92] Between the fourth *fitna* and the second half of the third/ninth century, most of the *qāḍī*s in Kufa were still drawn from local scholars, but they no longer belonged to the dominant Yamanī clans (such as Nakhaʿ) from within which judges had usually been selected in the second/eighth century.[93] The spread of doctrinal schools of law caused a standardisation of knowledge that was soon reinforced by a 'traditionalisation' of law in which a 'universal' Muḥammad replaced the local Companions as the source of legal practice. This doctrinal standardisation no longer left a place for local legal practices as they had existed. Thereafter, local practices could be recognised only insofar as they were assimilated into the main *madhhab*s.[94]

Conclusion

During the second half of the second/eighth century, appointments to the judiciary in Iraq and Egypt were the subject of strenuous competition between the local elite and the central government. Negotiations for the selection of appropriate candidates, which can be seen as evidence of the close collaboration between the local elite and the central government, do not conceal the issues at stake. The caliphate tried to increase its authority in the main provincial cities and reduce legal heterogeneity in the empire. The local learned elite resisted this policy in order to preserve its traditional power and local interests.

At first, the ʿAbbāsids' lack of legitimacy required some concessions, and the provincial elite succeeded in keeping some of its special prerogatives in the selection of *qāḍī*s until the end of the second/eighth century. The first ʿAbbāsid caliphs had to take into account the interests and particularities of the local situation: they could not afford to muzzle local wishes without renouncing their claim to restore justice. Benjamin Jokisch argues that Ḥanafī law was imposed by the central power on the Islamic empire by the means of judges.[95]

91. Tsafrir, *The History*, 27, 35.
92. Tsafrir, *The History*, 37; Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 171–2.
93. Tillier, *Les cadis d'Iraq*, 697.
94. On the persistence of regional trends within the classical *madhhab*s, see Hallaq, 'From Regional to Personal Schools', 18.
95. Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law*, 287f.

This theory is weakened by the fact that the central power and the local elite were at that time in a permanent negotiation. In the third/ninth century, however, the reinforcement of caliphal authority (particularly during the *miḥna*) and the evolution of political structures resulted in a definitive marginalisation of the local elite.

In the long run, the ʿAbbāsids did not succeed by coercion but by negotiating with local communities and by supporting new legal trends. The promotion of Ḥanafism—and, to a lesser extent, Mālikism—as well as job opportunities offered to those who had reached a high position in the Ḥanafī school, encouraged scholars to adhere to this school. They hoped that it would allow them to find a position as a judge, scribe, or professional witness.

On the whole, the transition from the 'ancient' to the 'personal' (or 'doctrinal') schools of law can be seen as the tension between two forms of identity. At the local level, the Muslim people of the main cities defended their material and moral interests with their attachment to local customs, rooted in the traditions of the Companions and Successors. At the centre, the ʿAbbāsid state engaged in a programme of centralisation and standardisation that can be seen as an attempt to enhance an Islamic 'universalism'. At the same time, the development of Prophetic *ḥadīth*—which eventually replaced, to a large extent, the older traditions of the Companions and of the Successors—appears as the most important factor in the development of a universal Islamic model, that of the Prophet Muḥammad. Relationships between religious scholars and the state have often been seen as antagonistic, each side trying to assert its authority over the other. From another point of view—that of a struggle between local practices and Islamic universalism—both the state and the scholars were moving toward the same end. In two distinct ways, they promoted a comprehensive identity over and above local traditions. The support of doctrinal schools of law contributed greatly to the reshaping of urban self-definitions. Muslims identified more and more with this new universal concept of knowledge, and less and less with local trends of thought.

List of Abbreviations

ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols. (New York, 1992)
AM	Anno Mundi
BHG	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 4 vols. (Vatican City, 1719–28)
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DHGE	*Dictionnaire de l'histoire et géographie ecclésiastique*
EIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
EI2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.
GCS	Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
HE	*Ecclesiastical History*
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OLA	*Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta*
P&P	*Past and Present*
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
SC	Sources chrétiens
SS	Scriptores Syri
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians

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Index

Aba (catholicos) 47, 65
ʿAbdishoʿ (sixth-century letter-writer) 37
ʿAbdishoʿ (thirteenth-century scholar) 49, 64n17, 66
Aaron 108, 112, 119
ʿAbbāsids
  attitudes to, 195–6
  legitimacy of 178, 185, 195
  centralisation, xxi, 193–4, 201–4
  family 155
  state 152, 193–4, 201–4
ʿAbbāsid revolution xxi, 183, 189, 196
ʿAbīd ibn Sharya 115, 118
Abraham ('prophet') xix, 157–60
Abraham of Kashkar ('Nestorian' monastic reformer) 67n29
Abraham of Nisibis (theologian) 50
Abū al-Bakhtari 226
Abū Bakr (caliph) 19, 195
Abū Ḥanīfa (jurist) 187, 195–201
Abū Muslim (revolutionary leader) 173, 179
Abū Naṣr ibn Nubāta 179
Abū Yūsuf 164, 187, 191n20, 194, 202
Acts of the Lateran Synod 1, 6, 20n83
Adam ('prophet') 21, 159–60
Addai (correspondent of Jacob of Edessa) 84–9
ʿAdī ibn Zayd (poet) 129–31, 134–6, 143–4
ʿAḍud al-Dawla 179
Akhbār al-quḍā 188–201
Akhbār al-Yaman 115, 116n60, 118
Akhbār quḍḍāt Miṣr 188, 190, 197–8, 200–202
al-Anṣārī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh 199
Alexander of Aphrodisias (philsopher) 63n7, 68n34, 70n43
Alexander of Macedon 176–7
Alexandria 7, 15–6, 36, 156–8, 177
Alexandrian pedagogic tradition 63–4, 67, 74, 78
Amalekites 107, 110–12, 119–20
ʿAmār ibn Yāssir 155
Ambrose of Milan 71
Amnesia 169–86
ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀs 156
Anania of Širak (chronicler) 56
al-ʿAnbarī,ʿUbayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan 191, 195–6
Anonymous Chronicle to 1234 4n13, 15, 157n27
anṣār 108, 155
  bias in historiography 105, 116, 121
al-Anṣārī, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd (jurist), 197
Antioch (patriarchate) 94
Antioch 93, 171, 184
Antiochene school of exegesis 45–6, 50, 68
Antiochus Monachus 5–6
Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius 9
Apollinarius ('heretic') 16, 47, 55
Arabisation 152–3, 156–7
Archaeology, as a source 5, 132–3, 171–2
Aristotle
  Analytics 72nn52–3, 77n72, 100
  Categories 61n2, 66, 71, 73, 76, 98, 100
  Organon 61n2, 66–7, 70n41, 71, 100, 101n67
  Topics 69 74n57, 78n75, 98, 100n64

Arius 33, 49
Armenians 3n6, 4, 29–41, 51, 96n50
Asbānbar (city) 171–3, 176
al-ʿAtakī, Abū Bakr ibn al-Faḍl 195–6
Athanasius Gamolo (patriarch of Antioch) 15, 91
Athanasius of Alexandria 98
Athanasius of Alexandria 98
Athanasius of Balad (philosopher) 65–6, 77n72, 78n75, 89, 94, 100
Athanasius the camel driver 15, 91
aṭlāl (poetic motif) 183–5
Augustine xi, 61
Avarayr, battle of 30–1
Aws 103, 108, 112–121

Babai the great, 54–9, 69–70
Baghdad 70, 78n74, 136, 144, 177–181
  legal policy 193–8, 203
  conquest 179
  palace 178
al-Bakrī (geographer) 107
al-Balādhurī 126n6, 175, 195n47
Bar Hebraeus 57, 64, 67, 79–80, 94, 97–8, 100
Barhadbeshaba 44, 48–51, 55
Barmakids 177
Barsauma of Susa 54–7
Basil of Caesarea xi, 45–6, 49, 81 98–9, 102
basmalla 162
Basra 166, 174, 189–190, 193–7, 199–203
  Legal tradition 197, 199
  Contrast with Kufa 192
  Local elite 195, 197, 203
Bāyakbāk (stepson of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn) 153
Bazaar of Heracleides 48–51, 65n21
Beh-Ardashīr (Veh-Ardashir) 171
Belisarius (general) 33
Bethlehem 21–2
Biographical dictionary see Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi; Wakīʿ
Book of Canon Law (*Kanonagirkʿ Hayocʿ*) 37
Book of Letters 31, 34–7
Boran (Persian queen) 55
Brown, Peter xi, xxii, 61, 63
al-Buḥturī (poet) 142n56, 183–5
Bukhara 177
Buyids 179, 181

Canons xvi, xviii, 37, 47–8, 84–90, 96, 98, 100
Cause of the Foundation of the Schools 65
Chalcedon
  attitudes to in Iraq 45–6, 51–8
  in Armenia 30–2
  and Barhebraeus 85
Chalcedonianism, conversion to 63
Chalcedonians xii–xiii, xviii
  as persecutors 25, 33, 93
  historical tradition 32, 46, 49, 52
  in Egypt 164
  presented as 'Nestorian' 34–5, 47–59
  internal debate 17
  cross-confessional dialogue 15, 19, 58, 66, 73, 84, 92
  sharing sacraments with other confessions 15, 19, 34, 85–90
  source of identity 24, 26–7, 80, 102
  doctrine 21–7, 65, 73
Chronicle of Seert 15, 43–56
Coins 5n14, 172
Companions to the Prophet 115n55, 155–7, 173, 176, 194, 204–6
Constantine xi, xxii, 10, 43n2
  Heraclius as a 'new Constantine', 11–2
Conversion 29, 40, 51, 86–8, 131–2, 152, 164, 170
Copts
  as 'crinkly-haired', 166
  as relatives of the Arabs, 157–9
  oppressed by the Romans
  as 'peoples of the black earth', 161–2
  as *dhimmī*, 154, 157–8
  as foreigners (*ʿajam*), 161–3
  rebellion, 163
  in administration 160
Council of Dvin 35, 37
Creed 48, 74, 93
Crone, Patricia 164
Cross 1–13, 171
Ctesiphon
  foundation 171
  legends 172–86
  compared to Baghdad 175–82
Cyril of Alexandria 45–7, 50–1, 54–8, 62, 98
Cyrus of Alexandria 15

Dadishoʿ Qaṭraya 67
Damascus 92–3, 166, 176n21, 181, 193
Damasus (Pope) 47

Damietta, Byzantine raid 153
David ('prophet' and king) 10–12, 21, 104n3, 107, 112, 119
David the Invincible (philosopher) 36, 41
Day, David 120
Dayr Hind (monastery) 125, 132, 140–1, 145–6
dhimmī, rights of, 139–40, 154, 157–8, 161–4
Dhū al-Qarnayn 176
Diodore of Tarsus 45–6, 49–50, 53, 73
Dionysius of Tell Maḥre 94
Dionysius the Aereopagite 25, 62, 79, 98–9
Dionysius Thrax 36
Ps-Dionysius 79
Diptychs 54–7
dīwān (poetry) 127, 182–5
dīwān (tax register) 152
Doctrine 1–2, 14–27, 35, 48, 52, 88–91
Dome of the Rock 181
Dual identity **124–6**, 126–42, **156–7**, 157–61

East India Company 174
Ecclesiastical history xvii–xviii, 31–2, 44–57, 94, 156
Edessa 16, 49, 90
Education 64–8, 80–1, 93–102
Egypt and Egyptians xx, 50–1, 174, 181, 188, 190, 199–200, 203
  Egyptian Arabs 150–2, **153–7**, 158, 163. Also see Copts
Ełišē (Eghishē) 29–31, 37–41
ʿEnanishoʿ 75
Encheiridion 76, 81
Ephrem 45, 48n16, 81, 98
Ethiopia xi
Eucharist 25–6, 84–90, 96
Ps.-Eulogius of Alexandria 71
Eusebius of Caesarea xi–ii, xviii, 44
Evagrius Ponticus ('mystic') 25, 62, 79, 98
Evagrius Scholasticus (historian) xviii, 46, 49, 51n29
Exogamy 137–8, 158
Ezekiel (catholicos) 48, 53n36

faḍāʾil 105, 110, 112, 154, 181n39
Fāṭimid 181
al-Fayyūm 159n40, 160, 163, 166
fiqh 154, 187–204
Firdawsī 126n7, 174
fitna (civil war in the caliphate) first 181
  second 157
  third 183, 189, 196
  fourth 202–3
al-Fiṭyawn 108, 111, 113–7
Fustat 153, 155, 174, 188, 192–3, 198, 200–2
Futūḥ al-Bahnasā' 159

Ps.-George of Arbela 57
George of Pisidia 8, 10–3
George, bishop of the Arabs 66, 73–4, 79–81, 86, 89–90, 100–1
Georgia xi
Ghassanids 51, 116, 126, 146n67
Ghawth ibn Sulaymān 198
Golgotha 1–2, 10
Grabar, Oleg 181
Graveyard (poetic theme) 130–1
Gregory Nazianzus 98–9
Gregory of Nyssa 98
Gregory the Illuminator 31

al-Hādī (caliph) 201
ḥadīth 106, 121n81, 154, **159–64**, 197, 204
Hagiography 5–7, 50, 81, 85–9, 93, 96–7
al-Hajjāj (Umayyad governor) 145–6
Hallaq, Wael 187–9
Ḥanafism 187, 195n44, 204
Hārūn al-Rashīd 141, 178, 190, 202
al-Ḥasan 181–2
al-Ḥazmī, ʿAbd al-Malik 201–2
Ḥenanishoʿ (catholicos) 67, 77
Heraclius 1–19, 24, 26, 32, 52–6
Heresiology 48–9
Heresy, accusations of 14–9, 35, 48–7, 84–9
Hierapolis 15, 91
al-Ḥīra xix–xx, 123–48, 189
History of Rabban Bar ʿIdta 97
History of Rabban Hormizd 97
History of Vardan and the Armenian War 38–41
Honorius (Pope) 16–7
Ḥunayn ibn Balūʿ al-Ḥīrī 134
Hurvitz, Nimrod 187–9
al-Ḥusayn ('imam') 181
Hūshang (mythical Persian king) 173

ʿIbād (Christian inhabitants of al-Ḥīra) 129, 133
Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ 63, 188–9, 193–4
Ibn Athīr 116, 178
Ibn Isḥāq 111n40, 118, 158
Ibn Rusta 107, 118
Ibn Zabāla xix, **103–21**, 175
Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam 149–67
Ibn ʿAsākir (historian) 198
Inheritance 190, 192, 199
Institutes of Junillus Africanus 67–8
Invasion
  of Palestine 5, 7, 9, 21
  of Egypt 149
Iran and Iranians 84, 126n7, 165–6, 177. Also see Sasanians, Barmakids, Zoroastrians, Khurasan
Iraq xii–v, xviii–xxii. Also see Ḥīra; Ctesiphon; Sasanians
  legal practice 164, 187–202
  settlement of Arabs 133, 200
  origin of legal scholars 201
  elites 188, 203
  historical tradition 120. Also see 'Nestorian'
  conquest 146, 176
  religious disputation 58, 70
  missionaries 48
Iṣfahān (Jayy) 177
al-Iṣfahānī 109–10, 115, 130n21, 173n10
Ps.-Isḥaq of Nineveh 57
Ishoʿyahb I (catholicos) 47–52
Ishoʿyahb II (catholicos) 52–7
Ismāʿīl ibn Alīsa 199–201
Iwān of Kisrā, attempted destruction of 177, 184
Iyād (tribe) 147

Jacob of Edessa xiii, 66, 76–7, 79, 81, **84–102**
Jamshīd (mythical king) 173
Jerusalem **1–23**, 105 112, 113n51, 171, 176n21, 181,
Jews and Judaism
  in Arabia, 104, 107–8, **110–20**
  in Iraq 171
  in Egypt 164
  engaged in disputation 92
  as a polemmical term for Christians 96
  conversion to 87
John bar Aphthonia xviii
John Chrysostom 45–9, 98
John Cubicularius 17
John Moschus 7, 16n67, 20, 25
John of Caesarea (philosopher) 71
John of Ephesus xv, 32–4, 38, 40–1, 48n17, 69
John Philoponus 70n43, 74, 76
John Rufus xiii
John the Almsgiver 5n14, 7, 16
John, stylite of Litarb (correspondent of Jacob of Edessa) 86, 90, 98
Jokisch, Benjamin 190, 203
Judges 154–6, 166, 190–206
Junillus Africanus 67–8
Justin II 33, 52
Justinian 9, 33, 52–6, 69–70

Kaʿba 160
al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī xxi, 175–8
Khazraj 104–21
Khudāy-nāmag xxi, 120, 170, 174
Khurasan 172, 177, 194–5
Khusraw I Anūshirvān 32–3, 40, 48, 171–3, 184
Khusraw II Aparvīz 8–10, 13, 30, 32, 52, 160, 171, 180
Khuzistan 34
Khuzistan Chronicle 4n12, 5n14, 178n24
al-Kindī 163, 167, 188, 198, 200nn71–2, 202n85
Kister, Meir 105
Kitāb al-Aghānī 109, 130n19, 131, 134, 136–7
Kitāb al-Kharāj 164
Kufa, xiv, xix, 123–40, 145–6, 174, 178
  jurists 189, 191–203
  elites 137, 203
  foundation 172

Lakhmid xix, 124–46
al-Layth ibn Saʿd 200, 202
Łazar Pʿarpecʿi (Ghazar Pʿarpetsʿi) 31, 37–8, 41
Lazica 33
Letters, 6, 12, 14–8, 20, 31, 34–9, 48, 54–6, 73, 86, 163, 180, 198
Life of Marutha of Takrit 81, 89, 93
Life of Simeon of the Olives 88, 96–7
Life of Theodota of Amid 84–5, 87, 89
Liturgy xvi–xvii, 3, 23–6, 57, 84–90, 96–7
Local history 103–21
Logic 70–8

Mabbug 15, 91
al-Madāʾin 172–86
al-Mahdī (caliph) 69, 178, 191, 194–9, 201
Māḥōze 172
al-Makhzūmī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān 200–1
Mālik ibn Anas (jurist) 190, 200
Mālikism 204
Mango, Cyril 10
Manichaeans 7, 50, 71
al-Manṣūr 173, 177–9, 190–201
al-Maqrīzī 117n67, 152
Mar Mattai (monastery) 101
Mar Qardagh 70
Marcian (emperor) 45, 51
Marcionites 48
Mardāvīj ibn Ziyār 179
Marī ibn Sulaymān 45–6, 49, 51
Māriya, handmaid of Hind 136
Māriyya al-Qibṭiyya 159–60
Martyrdom xii, xv, 2, 51–2, 98. Also see entries for Nestorius; Mar Qardagh; Vardan Mamikonean
Marwān I (caliph) 157
Maurice (emperor) 14, 30, 32, 51–2, 160
mawālī, status of 160, 164
Maximus Confessor 6, 14–21, 25–7
  Opuscula 6, 16n69, 17n73
  To the Monk Sophronius 14
Maʾrib dam 108
Mecca
  site of prophecy xix, 112
  comparison with Medina 105, 117
  school of jurisprudence 189
Medina 105–21, 155, 175–80, 189, 193–7
Merv 177, 179
Miaphysites 51, 57, 62–5, 69, 79, 83–102
  boundaries with other confessions 47, 59, 84–91, 97, 102
  seizure of churches 88, 92
  philosophers 62–5, 69
  Julianism 53
  'invasion' of Iraq 48–9. Also see Public disputation
Middle Persian xxin33, 120
miḥna 202, 204
Miracles of Cyrus and John 16
Modestus (*locum tenens* at Jerusalem) 5n14, 6, 10, 14, 20
Monastery of St. Thomas 93
Monenergism 2, 15, 17–8, 27
Monotheletism xvii, 2, 15n65, 17n74, 26n106, 52
Moses xi, 107–8, 110, 112, 119
Mother of Christ formula 50, 54
al-Mughīra ibn Shuʿba 137–8, 146–7
muhājirūn 137–8, 146–7
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallah ('prophet') 106, 118, 121n81, 154, **159–64**, 197, 204
Muḥammad ibn Masrūq (jurist) 201
al-Mundhir (Lakhmid king) 136, 141, 143n57, 146
al-Muqaddasī 174n15
Muqaṭṭam mountain 166
al-Mutawakkil (caliph) 203
Muʿāwiya I (caliph) 92, 116, 137, 146, 181

al-Naḍīr (Jewish clan at Medina) 112–3
Narratio de rebus Armeniae 15n64, 31–2, 35–6
Nebuchadnezzar 110
Neo-Chalcedonian 17, 62, 71n45, 75
Nestorianism (Church of the East) 15, 29, 34–5, 43–60, 85–93, 97, 101, 171
Nestorius xvii, 35, 45–58, 73, 81, 102
Nicaea (council) 43n2, 47, 49, 54–6
Nicetas (son of Shahr-Barāz) 10
Nisibis
  city of 88
  school of 48–50, 52–3, 63, 67, 69, 78
Noah 5n14, 173
Nora, Pierre 182
Normative practice (*sunna*), in jurisprudence 194
Nostalgia 142–5, 182–6
al-Nuʿmān al-Aṣghar 132
al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir 132, 136, 141, 145–6
al-Nuʿmān ibn Maʾ al-Samaʾ, dynasty of 127

Orphans, provision for 190

Papyri 151, 161–6
Pārsīg (Parthian) 170
Patristic heritage 16–7, 36, 43–51, 66–9, 75–8, 98–102
Paul of Edessa 94
Paul of Nisibis 53–7
Paul of Samosata 46
Paul the Persian 63–4

Persia and Persians, see Iran and Iranians
Peter of Callinicum (Miaphysite patriarch) 63
Petronas 153
Pharaonic heritage 150, 162, 166–7
Philosophy 36, 41, 61–78, 98–101
Philoxenus of Mabbug 63, 76, 81, 98, 102
Phocas (emperor) 13, 52
Phocas of Edessa (translator) 99–100
Photinians 46, 48
Platonism xi, 26, 36, 62–3, 66, 79
Pliny 171
Poetry 10–4, 123–48, 183–6
Porphyry 35–6, 66
Probus of Antioch 62–3, 73, 79n76
Procession 1, 9, 23, 88–90
Procopius 31, 33
Psalms 85, 97, 101
Psephos 17n73, 21
Public disputation 16, 40, **68–70**, **91–3**, 164

qādīs see 'judges'
Qartmin (monastery) 96
qawm ('nation', 'people') 156–7, 165
Qaysi (tribe) 202
Qenneshre (monastery) xiii, xix, 64, 66, 77n68, 80, 87, 93–5
al-Qurashī, Sulaymān ibn Bilāl (jurist) 198
Qurʾan 166 citation 180
  use by judges 190
  source of conversion 121

al-Raʾy, Rabīʿa 198
Ridda bint ʿAlī 162
Risāla fī al-ṣaḥāba 188–9, 194n38
Rome, city of, xi–ii, 1, 7, 13, 19, 25
al-Rūmiyya, city, 171–3, 177, 179

Sabrishoʿ (catholicos) 52
Sacraments
  last rites and burial 88–90
  eucharist, 25–6, 84–90, 96
  baptism 26, 84–91
Ṣafra 163, 165
al-Sakhāwī 106
Salmān al-Fārisī 173, 176
Salvation 25–7, 131
Samarra 144, 153
al-Samhūdī 106–20
Samuel, metropolitan of Ctesiphon 89
Sasanians xi–xxi, 70
  and Ḥīra 126, 130–41
  and Christian historians 43–57
  and Islamic historians xii, 120, 127, 170–83
  conflict with Romans 1–14, 24–5, 54, 184
  rule in Armenia 31–3, 38–41
  ruins 174
Saʿd ibn Abī Waqād 155
Schacht, Joseph 187, 189
School of Nisibis see Nisibis
Schools of Islamic law
  doctrinal (*madhhab*) 191, 199–204
  regional 189, 193
  personal 187–8, 203
Ps.-Sebēos 4, 9–11, 14–5, 30–3, 37, 40
Sergius of Reshaina 62, 66, 70n43, 79, 99, 100n64
Serrano, Richard 183–4
Severus of Antioch 47, 48n16, 65, 98–9
Severus of Sebokht 64, 66, 94
al-Shābushtī 136, 145–7
Shahdost of Tirhan 57–8
Shahr-Barāz 1, 4, 8, 10
al-Sharīf al-Raḍī 127–9
al-Shaybānī 187
Shiʿīs 181, 195–6
shuʿūbiyya xx, 165
Simeon beth Arsham 69
Sin, punishment for, 11–2, 14, 19–24, 86
Socrates Scholasticus 44
Sophronius 7–27
  On the Capture of Jerusalem 7–8
  On the Holy Cross 10–12
  On the Nativity 21–2, 24
  On the Theophany 23–4
The Spiritual Meadow 7, 20, 25
Stephen of Dora 1, 20n83
Stetkevych, Jaroslav 185
Strabo 171
Syllogism 66, 70–2, 74, 77
Sylvanus of Qardu 80
Syrians 6, 37. Also see Miaphysites (for 'West Syrians') and Nestorians (for 'East Syrians)
Syrian Arabs 108, 115, 183, 189, 194, 196

al-Ṭabarī 110–1, 175, 178, 180, 182n43
Theodore abū Qurra 78

Theodore bar Koni 70n41, 78–9
Theodore of Mopsuestia 44–6, 48, 52–3, 67
Theodoret of Cyrrhus xin4, xviii, 44–5, 49
Theophanes Confessor 8nn30 and 33, 15
Thomas of Harkel 94
Thomas of Marga 75
Three Chapters 52–3
T'ovma Arcruni 32
Tiberius 33
Timothy I (patriarch) 69, 78–9
Translation
  from Greek to Armenian 32, 36–41
  from Greek to Arabic 77n69, 79n78
  from Greek to Syriac 45–7, 62–3, 64, 76–83, 95, 98–9, 101
Tsafrir, Nurit 187, 193–4, 196
Tubbaʿ, king of Himyar 108, 111, 115–7, 118n69
Ṭūlūnids xx, 153, 161

Ubi sunt motif (poetry) 131–2
Umar II (caliph) 152
Umayyads 176n21, 190, 194. Also see ʿAbd al-Malik, Marwan I, Muʿāwiya, and Umar II
ʿUthmān (caliph) 156
ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān 155

Vahan Mamikonean 30
Vardan Mamikonean 30–4, 38–41
Vasak of Siwnik' 38

Wakīʿ 188–201
waqf (pious foundation) 190, 199
White Palace 171–85
Wine 130, 132, 135, 140, 142, 184
wujūh (notables) 201–2

Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī 78
Yamanī (tribe) 20–3, 192
al-Yāqūt 113, 128, 133, 135, 138, 141, 173
Yazdegird III (Sasanian shah) 172
al-Yaʿqūbī 172–3, 176
Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i 32
Yovhannēs II Gabełean (catholicos) 32–5

Zāb (mythical Persian king) 173
Zachariah (patriarch of Jerusalem) 4–5
Ps.-Zachariah of Mytilene 51, 62, 93n37
Zoroastrianism ('Magianism') 29–30, 38–40
al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār 120
Zuhra 103, 107, 111
al-Zuhrī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh 202